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Presented To

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History of
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recd 1865

MARY MORTON AND HER SISTER;

OR, THE

Advantages of the Savings Bank.

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PART I.

CHAPTER I.

“O, happy she whom prudence leads,
By growing steps, to virtuous deeds ;
And blest, beyond all measure blest,
Whose conscience is no painful guest !”

MARY MORTON was a native of Yorkshire, and, while her lot in this world was a humble one, she had the blessing of being the child of parents who, though poor and lowly, were so honest and truly pious that they were equally respected by their richer neighbours, and by those in their own condition of life. They brought up a large family with great

credit to themselves; and till she lost her father, Mary never knew what it was to feel affliction. Even then, she did not sorrow without hope or consolation, for she had reason to believe that, through his faith in the merits and atonement of his Saviour, he was gone to receive the reward of well-spent days; and had the comfort of thinking that she had never given him an hour's wilful uneasiness when he was in health: and, at the risk of her own life, had not only dutifully, but cheerfully, assisted her poor stricken mother in nursing him through the dangerous fever that carried him to his grave.

Though the loss of a dear, kind, hard-working husband was a very sudden and grievous calamity—never in this world to be got over—Mary's mother did not, as is too often the case under such a trial, give herself up to lamentations and laziness.

“I have now more need than ever to be industrious,” she would say to those of her thoughtless acquaintance who wondered to see her set herself briskly to all her former employments, as soon as the melancholy funeral was over; “and I am sure I cannot show my love for my poor dear husband better than by trying to provide for his fatherless children, so far as I am able, nor can I better discharge my duty to God than by striving to submit, without murmuring,

to the loss of what He has been pleased to take from me."

Her outward composure soon returned; and not being given to much talking, few knew how she struggled with her aching heart, or how earnestly she prayed for the power that supported her. Seeing she was so patient under her cross—so willing to bear her burden like a Christian widow and mother—many of her kind-hearted humble neighbours lent her a helping hand when she was particularly busy; whilst some of the affluent families of the vicinity occasionally sent her a packet of children's cast-off clothes for her little ones, with, now and then, a trifling present of money; and these timely aids, joined to a small allowance from the parish, enabled her to maintain herself and children very decently. "It went hard with her, however," to use her own words, "to be obliged to seek relief from the poor's rates." She was not foolishly proud, but she was respectably born—had lived many years in a clergyman's family, where she saved a trifle towards furnishing her cottage, and her late husband was a carpenter, in good work when he died. She had always hoped that she should never be driven to ask for that support which her former master often told his flock was meant only for the sick, the aged, and orphans. She and her husband had always intended to lay by

something for the hour of need, when their young family should be a little off their hands; and if he had been spared a few years longer they would doubtless have managed to do so. But man proposes—God disposes! As it was, she felt thankful for such assistance, and strove to quell the sorrowful thoughts that would come into her mind when she went to draw her weekly pay from the overseers of the parish. She wished much to have kept her two eldest children—both girls—near her, till at least they were more settled in good habits and principles, for she knew temptations are difficult to be conquered by the young; and, although she had done all in her power to train them to religion at home, and worked early and late to give them time to attend the National and Sunday Schools, benevolently set up by the Vicar and other generous persons, she was aware that the heart is sadly inclined to sin, and that children, early sent away from their parents' control, are in great danger of being enticed into wickedness. For some few years she took in a little washing; but finding her strength failing, and that she could neither maintain her children longer, nor procure places for them in the village, she yielded to their often-expressed desire to go into service in a neighbouring market-town. She felt, indeed, it was a duty she owed to them to give them leave to obtain

something for themselves; and accordingly they entered the same day into different families, but not far apart from each other.

“ You are now going, my dear children,” she said, the night before they went away, casting a sorrowful look at their little bundles, ready made up for starting early in the morning, “ to be in some measure your own mistresses, and, young as you both are, if you keep close to these short rules, you will do well, and the blessing of the Almighty will follow you everywhere,—‘ Fear God, honour the King, and do to all your fellow-creatures as you would wish they should do unto you.’ You may have many little troubles and vexations, particularly at first,—all have them, oftentimes mercifully sent from Heaven to wean us from too great a love of this world, and prepare us for the next. Perhaps I was too fond and too proud of your dear father. I did not walk so closely with God as he did, I know; now, I humbly hope, I sit more lightly even to my children. Well, dears, as I was saying, if you mind these short simple rules, and are industrious and obliging, and put your heart into your work, all will go on smoothly in time, for ‘ where there’s a will there’s a way.’ ” The poor mother here stopped—her voice choked by sorrow she vainly strove to overcome; and her daughters, respecting her grief, remained silent. After a long

pause, she went on. "I have still a few words to say to you, though you are both so young it hardly seems necessary; but life is short and uncertain, so we should not put off till to-morrow what we can do to-day—it is, dears, about lovers."

Both blushed, and felt for the first time that they were really women. Mary looked wistfully into her mother's face; Jane held down her head. "Don't be so silly as to think every youth who may dangle after you means to marry you, even if able to maintain a wife—there are many who only run after young women just to pass their own leisure hours pleasantly, if they intend no worse, oftentimes making fun of them afterwards, as vain credulous creatures wild to be married, or at best thinking no more about them when business or inclination leads them elsewhere. There are others who pretend to court the maid, thereby to get the opportunity of robbing the master. And this is no doubt why employers are seldom willing to allow lovers to come about the house. If by and by, when you are a few years older, some respectable young man should really seem in earnest, take courage and beg leave for him to be allowed to come and see you now and then, for marriage is honourable in all; be careful, however, that you do not let your courtship fill all your thoughts, to the neglect of your proper work, thinking as

you are soon to be married you need not be careful to please your employers any longer. This is what foolish love-sick girls often do—get turned away in consequence, and lose a good place before the sweetheart has a home to bring them to. Above all, never give your lover victuals from your master's pantry: it is downright stealing, whatever thoughtless young men and maids may think of it, and very mean in both of them,—she to give treats at another person's expense, and he to be so greedy as to accept them. Want of honest prudent conduct, in this respect, in many female servants, makes masters and mistresses afraid of countenancing the visits of men of whom they know nothing. When the time comes, I hope you will act differently, and have behaved so well beforehand that they may be inclined to think favourably of your suitors. And don't be in too great a hurry to change your condition, or fancy it hard to have to earn your own living. It was God's sentence, when our first parents sinned and were driven from Paradise, that man should get his bread by the sweat of his face; and all must obey it, if they mean to be happy or respected, in one way or other. Rich people have to labour with their heads—poor with their hands. There is common law for both in this matter, and none can disobey it if they mean to lead useful, honourable lives, which

I pray to God you may do many a long year."

Both were very fond of their mother, and made many promises to be steady and industrious, and bear in mind all she had said. A few short prayers and a chapter in the Bible closed this trying day. The other children had been long in bed; and, weary with the day's work and excitement, the two girls were soon fast asleep.



CHAPTER II.

“We trace the map of our own paths.”

“What will our future be? Alone He knoweth
Who doth its record keep;
But this we know, ‘Whate’er our hand now soweth,
That shall we also reap.’”

By daybreak next morning every member of the little household was astir; for, “Early to bed and early to rise, is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise,” was the truthful old proverb to which Mrs. Morton owed much of her comfort and respectability. Bloomhill, where she had lived since her

marriage, and where all her children had been born, was a pretty, lively, populous village, with farms around, and some rich people in it, and a handsome old church ; she was well known, and the news of the departure of her daughters brought many friends and play-mates to take leave and offer good wishes for their success in life. She, and her three other children, went with them a mile on their way ; and then, after many mutual tears and kisses, the two sisters found themselves alone, beginning the world on their own account, and under their own guidance !

Mary was fifteen, and her sister Jane seventeen. Both were modest, sensible, well-disposed, healthy, nice-looking maidens. Jane, especially, promised to be a very fine handsome young woman, and had been told by silly acquaintance that she was the beauty of the parish ; thus encouraging the vanity which her mother had detected in her character, and did all she could to root out. They walked a mile more in silence ; and then, with the brightness of spirit natural to youth, they began to look forward to the happy future before them. For the *future always* is happy in the eyes of the young. They have had no experience of their own, nor yet witnessed that of others. The trials, and difficulties, and sorrows of the aged they may have heard of but as a tale that is told—and remembered no more.

It was a beautiful morning in leafy June; the richness of early summer was added to the freshness of spring not yet worn off. Part of their way lay on one side along a deep winding river, its banks bordered by tall trees, and fringed with green underwood, reflected in the clear blue sparkling waters; and on the other was a broad turnpike road, alive with carts and carriages going to and from the large town to which the girls were bound. Beyond, were fertile fields with cattle quietly reposing or grazing, and the air was full of the perfume of wild flowers and the song of sweet birds. As they passed hand in hand, each carrying her little bundle, the end of their journey was plain to those who met them, and many kind salutations, many good wishes, and some good advice greeted them from humble travellers like themselves; to which they returned modest curtseys, or a single "Thank you," their mother having often cautioned them never to enter into conversation with perfect strangers. Mary's new home (rather in the suburb) was first reached, and at the door they took their farewell, promising to see each other as often as they could.

Mary felt the parting with her family more than Jane, and thought for some days she should never be quite comfortable away from her mother, two little brothers, and a young sister. But she was too much like her mother

in disposition to fret long. She had that first of blessings, a cheerful contented mind ; and, as she determined to be good, she soon discovered that she could not help being happy. She was no great scholar, owing her little learning solely to the short periods her mother could spare her from household business ; but she was able to read fluently and write tolerably by dint of diligent application when at school. As well as she could, she wrote down her mother's advice, prayed for assistance to enable her to follow it, and then set herself in good earnest to learn her work. She had fortunately entered into a highly respectable family, and she speedily began to think the days slipped away even more pleasantly than at home. She laboured no harder, went to bed little later, got up no earlier, was much better fed, and had the pleasure of knowing that she was not only earning her own bread, instead of being a burden to her mother, but should ere long have it in her power to send some of her old things to her little sister, for whom she felt great affection.

It must not be supposed, however, that Mary had no trials to contend with,—no mortifications to bear. Hers was the common lot—she had both ; and nothing save the good principles her parents had instilled into her could have given her strength to keep either her place or her temper, for her fellow-

servant was a very cross, irreligious woman, who used all the artifices she could think of to corrupt her, and after finding she did not succeed, to get her dismissed. Night and morning, when Mary knelt down to repeat the Lord's Prayer (so short, all servants, if willing, may find a few minutes to offer up that most admirable form of words, given by our blessed Saviour Himself to his Apostles and through them to the world), she would call her a "canting Methodist;" and when she saw her careful not to waste a crumb, abuse her for being a mean-spirited, stingy creature. She had formerly lived in a great family, where the negligent house-keeper had allowed the servants to waste and destroy their master's property: and, as far as it was possible, she did the same thing in her present place. Mary felt greatly annoyed, both at her improper conduct and personal ill treatment; but remembering, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not,"* she quietly continued, in spite of sneers and reproaches and hindrances, to perform her own duty to God and her mistress. Without asking Him to bless and guide her, she knew she had no right to expect his mercies; and she could not be brought to believe it was mean or stingy to be careful of what did not belong to herself, and seemed, in a manner, confided to her honesty and integrity.

* Prov. i. 10.

"I may do what I will with my own," she said one day when this bad woman had been more than usually tormenting; "but I consider it almost a robbery to wilfully spoil, or waste, or give away unknown to her, what my mistress has entrusted to my keeping."

Finding from this bold speech that she could not be persuaded or forced into wickedness, the sad creature did all in her power to get her turned away. She was a clever as well as an artful person, useful and active in the house, and smooth to her employers. She left no stone unturned to set Mrs. Lester against Mary; and the obstacles she threw in the way of her work, together with her sly hints and positive falsehoods, at length made Mrs. Lester fearful that Mary was by no means the guileless person she seemed, and would not suit her. But it rarely happens that constant good conduct does not bring its own reward even here, or perseverance in strict honesty does not prove the best policy in the long run. Mrs. Lester was, luckily for the poor fatherless girl, not one of those idle mistresses who never overlook their servants themselves, trusting to the reports and judgment of others. There was something in Mary's always respectful manner, even when scolded, that pleased her—something in her general behaviour that seemed to say she did her best, did what she

could ; that sure sign of a willing heart. She resolved to watch both narrowly, and after a few months became so convinced that Mary was a willing, upright, painstaking girl, that she began to feel a real regard for her ; and, aware that her wages were low, made her many little presents, both useful and gratifying, as testimonials of her satisfaction. This mode of rewarding her services Mrs. Lester wisely considered better than to give a very young girl much money at command. Mary's companion and enemy fared differently. Certain now that she had basely endeavoured to deceive her, and to wrong an innocent fellow-servant just come from a kind mother's care, Mrs. Lester grew suspicious of her character on other grounds, and very shortly afterwards took an opportunity of giving her notice to quit. Her successor was a respectable woman, if not quite a religious one, and with her Mary got on very comfortably. There was still another blessing in Mary's place that remains to be mentioned. Her master and mistress and their friends were thoughtful persons, who never dropped before servants any of those unguarded, heedless remarks that sometimes give rise, in uninformed minds, to dangerous or irreverent notions on serious subjects. And happy indeed would it be both for masters and domestics if this were more generally the case—if the former

would bear in mind that the idle talk forgotten, perhaps, by them as soon as uttered, is heard and too often pondered upon by the latter. Vainly is it argued that children and servants ought not to listen to what they know is not addressed to or intended for them; the ear *instinctively* catches, and the memory *will* retain the impressions thus received for good or for evil, to reappear, like bread scattered on the waters, at some future time.

Mary had been in this family about a year, when, one day, whilst waiting at table, attending silently to what passed, as was her custom, by which means she knew she often gained much instruction—for “a wise man will hear and will increase learning”*—she heard Mr. Lester tell a gentleman on a visit to him that a Savings Bank was just opened in the town; and, gathering from their conversation that it must prove a vast benefit to all persons desirous of providing for the future out of small present means, particularly industrious mechanics and servants, she felt a strong wish to put in a trifle herself. But she had only four pounds a-year; and her mother having been able to give her little more than her blessing when she left home, she was still bare of clothes. The advantages of the Savings Bank, however, ran in her head. “It would be some-

* Prov. i. 5

thing to help her, if she should by any misfortune lose her present place, until she had got another, or to assist her mother if she came to distress." She went to her box as these thoughts rose in her mind, and began to think where she could save. It was a hard matter to fix upon the article she could do without; she had so many wants, and some so urgent. As she turned over and over again her slender stock of apparel, she came to a small paper parcel, neatly tied up in the corner of an old pocket handkerchief, containing twelve shillings, which she had been hoarding up to buy a new bonnet. "No, that I cannot spare," she said to herself, laying it down again in its corner; "my old one is very shabby—even mother said I must have a new bonnet this spring: and yet," she continued, taking it up again, "it would be such a comfort to have a sum of money of one's own beforehand, which will be almost a fortune when I'm woman grown; to be set above the fear of want now—to be quite certain and sure that if it should be God's will that I or mother was afflicted with sickness, we need not go to the parish, but stop in our own house till we either got better or were provided for in heaven. Perhaps if there had been such a bank when mother was young, she would have made a provision for a rainy day, as people say, and thus avoided going to the overseers, which, I

know, it pains her heart to do." These reflections, at length, prevailed over strong desires for the new bonnet; yet half afraid her courage might not hold out long, and sensible a good action can never be too quickly performed, she asked leave to visit her sister the same evening, hoping that Jane, who was also saving for a new bonnet, would be glad to follow her example. As she was ever true to her word, returning if possible five minutes before the promised time rather than five minutes after it, Mrs. Lester readily granted her permission to go out, and, with the twelve shillings in her hand, she went at six o'clock to sit an hour with Jane. The sisters were not far apart; Jane, indeed, lived in the outskirts of the town, but it hardly took twenty minutes to meet each other, and still, somehow, they were seldom together—still seldomer for more than half an hour at a time. Mary had much to do; so had Jane, but she was not so fortunate in her first mistress as Mary.

For some little time before Jane left home her anxious mother had tried to procure her a place in a family bearing a steadier character; but no other presented itself (for good situations are not so readily met with as young people sometimes think), and there was one advantage in this being very near her sister, who was more sedate and more

naturally industrious; her example therefore, she hoped, would keep fresh in Jane's memory what she had been taught at home. Jane too, who was not quite so sweet tempered as Mary, showed some impatience to begin her new career; and, both having been confirmed the same spring, could not bear to hear of Mary, the younger of the two, going first into the world. So (though rather distrustfully) Mrs. Morton let her take it. Mrs. Wilson was much richer than Mrs. Lester,—had several servants, saw a great deal of company, chiefly on Sunday, and could therefore give them few opportunities of attending public worship. She liked her domestics to spend all their money in dress, because she thought it creditable to herself; never considering, nor in fact caring, what became of them when they left her. Private prayers or religious instructions were of course unknown in such a house; and Jane, whose principles were not so solidly grounded as Mary's, was already fast forgetting her former sober way of life under the baneful teaching of her new acquaintance in the servants' hall.

Dinner was not over when Mary got to the back entrance; and there was such loud talking, laughing, whistling, and singing in the kitchen, her modest taps were long unheard. At last Jane, who was in the midst of the uproar and amusement, came with a

flushed face, and, at Mary's request, went with her outside the door.

"What can you have to tell me," she asked rather shortly when they were alone, "since mother and the rest of 'em are well?"

Mary unfolded her little project, and hoped Jane would join her in it. Jane looked perfectly astonished—then burst into a fit of laughter. "Save!" she cried in a loud voice; "save! put my spare cash into a Savings Bank—the lass is cracked, surely? Why, I always owe my pitiful wages before they are due, and if I had double it wouldn't be too much: no, nor enough when one has such a lot of things to buy. And, as to my old bonnet, I wouldn't wear it a month longer, except on week-days, to please all the mighty good gentry in this town, who are contriving (as I have heard) in this very way to save their own pockets. No, I promise you, I'll not be taken in by their fine speechifying, if you are; I'd not put a penny into their beggarly cheating concern to please the king and all his ministers. So now you know my mind, Mary, there's nothing more to be said about it, that I know of, so far as relates to me. But how you are to contrive to lay by money at four pounds a-year wages, when I can't make both ends meet with six guineas, is my wonderment—unless, indeed, these great lords and ladies, and other fine

folk, will club together to make up a swingeing purse for you to put into their pet bank to begin with. Yes, no doubt, that's it, and you'll be as rich as a long-bearded Jew by the end of the year, and I shall have to come and borrow a good round sum of you to pay off my debts at Christmas."

Thus saying, with a cool, smiling good-bye, and a playful nod of the head, she walked quickly back to the kitchen door, leaving Mary to go about her business, not a little vexed at her reception, and much afraid there was in this seemingly silly, thoughtless answer, more than was uttered. She feared it was a proof that her sister had not given up a young man in the town, who, though very good-looking and clever at his trade, was reported to be idle, and had got among a set of disorderly, unprincipled acquaintance, who, being too lazy to work for their own living, were hatching plots to gain the property of others. In spite of her mother's parting advice about lovers, she had accepted him as a sweetheart soon after she settled in the town—walking out with him whenever she could find an opportunity, so that her neighbourhood to Mary proved of but little use to her. Against this young man Mary had often warned her. She had not read her Bible to so little purpose as not to learn from it that, from the beginning of the world, there have been high and low, rich

and poor,—and that our blessed Lord himself, the Maker of all men and all things, whilst He for our salvation was pleased to put on our human flesh, was so anxious to submit to the laws and governors of the country He was in, as to work a miracle to pay the tribute money!

She had hoped that a petulant dispute between them, a few weeks before, would end in a downright quarrel; and, reading in her flippant speech the dangerous opinions of her admirer, she returned home very melancholy. The next morning she inquired her way to the Savings Bank; and, with a feeling of honest pride and pleasure that restored her cheerfulness, she saw her humble deposit safely received and registered. Learning, however, that till she could make up the sum of one pound she would not be entitled to any interest on her money, she resolved to carry in the remaining eight shillings at her earliest opportunity; and was enabled to do so sooner than she expected, for the gentleman who spoke with her master of the benefit of Savings Banks took his leave the next day, and at parting gave to herself and fellow-servant half-a-crown each. The cook begged Mary to accompany her to a show of wax-works, Mrs. Lester having given both leave to go out in the evening, if they wished it, to see this sight. Mary, with a sigh, resisted the

temptation, put the half-crown into her box, took down her Bible, and soon forgot her disappointment. She was so employed when Mrs. Lester came into the kitchen to see if the boy, who cleaned knives and shoes, worked in the flower-garden, and ran errands, was properly occupied in their absence. "Why are you here," she said, "Mary? how is it you did not go out with the cook?" Mary confessed the reason with some modest reluctance.

"I highly commend you, Mary," said Mrs. Lester; "you have shown not only a vast deal of self-denial in one so young, but much good sense. I was inconsiderate in making you such an offer. But I did not suppose you meant to save out of your low wages; and our friend's visit having occasioned you a good deal of extra trouble, I thought you and the cook had a kind of right to a little recreation, and might fairly employ his gift in that way. You have acted prudently: Savings Banks, whatever heedless, idle, or ill-disposed persons may say to the contrary, are one of the many blessings of this happy country, where the poorer classes of society are more cared for and more favoured than in any other under the sun, and they can never be too thankful to the Government for the protection and liberal encouragement it grants them. In no other club (as I may call it) can money

be nearly so safe; for it not seldom happens that, for want of a good calculation, the money contributed is all expended before some of the oldest members have received any benefit,—besides which there is often much foolishly wasted in flags, bands of music, hire of rooms, eating, and drinking. I know ill-minded men have tried to persuade poor people, artisans, servants, and clerks, not to put into the banks, under the pretence that their employers may be led to lower their wages, or salaries, if they find out that they can spare anything from them: but this is only a shallow, deceitful device, to keep everybody as improvident and debased as themselves. You may be sure, Mary, all respectable masters and mistresses and tradespeople will, on the contrary, be glad to better the condition of those they see willing to help themselves; for laziness, shiftlessness, and thoughtlessness, are always despised, and often feared. ‘*Out of debt, out of danger,*’ has more wisdom in it than short-sighted folks commonly perceive. I often myself call to mind the wise and beautiful prayer of Agur;” and, taking up Mary’s Bible as she spoke, she turned to the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, and read,—

“ ‘Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?

or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.'

"Make this prayer yours, as it is mine, and fear not, after using all proper means (for we must not expect miracles—to be fed, and clothed, and shielded from evil accidents by a few lazy wishes that all may go well with us), that a blessing will follow your exertions to do your duty in that state of life in which it has pleased God to place you. And now, after this long conversation, to prove to you how much I am really pleased with your conduct, I give you the remaining five and sixpence, that you may begin to get interest on your money directly."

Mary's face flushed with delight—she made a deep curtsy—her heart was too full for words, and the next market-day, when the bank was open to receive deposits, she carried in the eight shillings, and received a little book with her name, and the amount of her savings fairly written in its first page.

It may here be remarked, that when ladies discover such a prudent spirit in their domestics, they would do well to encourage it by a little praise, or trifling present occasionally. They should recollect they have duties to perform as well as their servants, and can scarcely have a better opportunity than this; since, after the fear of God, prudence in a servant is the root of all virtue, the secret foundation of integrity and faithfulness.



CHAPTER III.

“Time is going, time is going,
Like a stream that’s ever flowing.
Am I sowing, am I sowing?
Will the crop be worth the mowing?
When the mowing, when the mowing,
Shall declare what’s been the sowing:
Oh the tears all overflowing,
If good fruit has not been growing!”

It so happened, that a few months after this great event in Mary’s little history was the feast at Bloomhill, the pretty village where, as before related, Widow Morton lived; and, as they had only seen their mother once since they left her, both sisters

gained leave to visit her on this gala-day, kept in remembrance (but, unhappily, not in the same spirit) of that solemn one when, some hundred years before, the pious inhabitants, with prayer and praise, thanked God that the noble old church was then first opened for his worship. Bloomhill was five miles off; and, having to return the same evening, they rose betimes. Jane was to call upon Mary to begin their walk, she having to pass Mrs. Lester's house. To be punctual was one of Mary's orderly habits, but not Jane's; so she had stood waiting for her nearly half an hour ere she made her appearance, when they set off in high glee, with a bright blue sky over their heads, giving promise of a glorious day. After, however, their first greetings were ended, Mary's spirits received a check, and she felt almost abashed as she remarked how differently they were dressed. Jane, being two years older, and a very tall, fine, showy girl, had readily obtained two guineas a year more than her sister; and, following the example of her fellow-servants, who spent every shilling they got in finery, she looked far more like a smart tradesman's daughter than a respectable housemaid. At first she had been much surprised to find them sitting up till midnight to trim caps, and make collars and frills, whilst the holes in their stockings remained undarned, and their under garments were in rags; but bad habits are

soon caught by heedless young people, and in a few months she forgot many good and learnt many shocking lessons. She did not do so herself, but she saw no particular harm in servants wearing their mistresses' stockings and other articles, "because mistresses were so rich they could afford to buy new ones;" nor yet in pilfering a little tea and sugar, and such things, for the same reason. And perhaps the risk of detection, rather than a better motive, prevented her from acting as they did. On this great occasion, besides the new bonnet, she wore many other new things—some paid for—some taken on trust from inconsiderate tradespeople, relying on her being servant in a wealthy family for future payment: a practice exceedingly to be reprobated, as tending to encourage extravagance and dishonesty in young and thoughtless domestics. To increase poor Mary's dissatisfaction at her own humble garb, she fancied Jane was secretly ashamed of her. She talked all the way of nothing but the fashions,—how gowns were made and bonnets were trimmed,—of the necessity of being dressed like other people,—what handsome things one acquaintance wore, and what grand wages another had got by going to London. In short, Mary was quite downcast for some time; but nothing serves to raise the spirits like money in the purse, coupled with the certainty of having done right, "for that

shall surely bring a man peace at the last ;” so, as she walked along, this feeling of self-approbation, with the fineness of the day, the singing of the pretty birds, and the sight of the beautiful flowers growing under the hedge-rows, made her as happy as the larks that soared above their heads. Every now and then she lagged a step or two behind, to gather some of the tallest blue-bells and whitest wood anemones, or stopped a minute or two to listen to the song of some very, very sweet little bird.

“ If I had not such a kind mistress in the town, I should be half unhappy not to live in the country,” said she at length ; “ there one is so often reminded of the goodness of God, one can never feel uneasy long. I often think of those beautiful words, so full of spiritual meaning and comfort, ‘ If God so clothe the grass of the field, and feed the fowls of the air, shall he not much more care for me?’ And these sweet pretty flowers bring to one’s thoughts the lovely parable about the lilies of the field, more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory ; and then I am comforted under all those little troubles and vexations, that, as our good clergyman used to tell mother when she wept about poor father, fall to the lot of everybody, to prepare them for leaving this world, to dwell with Him in a better.”

“ Well ! I’m sure *I don’t* wish to live in

the country," replied Jane, yawning. "If it was not that she lived near a town, I'm sure I wouldn't stay a month longer with my cross madam."

"And where would you go?" asked Mary gravely.

"Oh! there are plenty of places."

"Yes, and plenty of servants also; and such plenty that in these times those who have tolerable situations cannot be too careful to keep them. Depend upon it, Jane, there are more of the one than the other."

"Perhaps it is as you say," replied Jane; "but service is no heritage after all; there's only one comfort, one isn't forced to be in bondage even in England, yet."

"There may be other kinds of bondage besides service," said Mary, hesitatingly, for she feared to offend her sister; so she quickly added, "not but, dear Jane, that if you could hear of what I call a quieter place, I should be very glad, for it seems you are seldom able to get to church, or even mend your own things, which is a great loss to a poor girl, and takes away much from her earnings."

Jane did not answer. She looked half inclined to be angry; but they were approaching the village, and, as they came nearer, the sight of the booths built up in the one long, broad street, the little children, all in their best, skipping about here and there full of joy, beating their tiny drums and blowing

their squeaking penny trumpets with all their might, the many gaily-dressed holiday folks strolling about, and a peep of their mother's cottage, changed their thoughts and filled both with gladness. It was easily known from all the rest, for the little front (which she whitewashed once a year in honour of this very feast, with her own hands) was like the driven snow. The clean casements shone bright in the sun, the narrow strip of ground before it was full of pot-herbs, bachelor's-buttons, and fragrant thyme, with a lavender bush, and a thriving young slip of southernwood, familiarly named lad's love. On one side of the low doorway was Mary's favourite honeysuckle, planted by herself from a branch given by a playmate; and on the other a rosemary-tree. Their little brothers and sister, who were standing at the door hoping to see them on this great merrymaking, ran forward to meet them the moment they were in sight, and, in a few minutes more, they were held fast in their fond mother's arms.

They had not met for upwards of half a year, and their mutual joy was very great. Even poor old pussy purred and rubbed herself against their petticoats to welcome them, rubbing long and hard, especially against Mary's, for she dearly loved all dumb animals. Mrs. Morton made them a nice cup of tea; and after they had rested awhile and chatted over family affairs, Jane proposed that they should

walk into the village just to look about them a little, and visit some of their former acquaintance. Mary preferred remaining at home; and, whilst her mother got ready a gooseberry pudding, made from a couple of bushes growing behind the cottage, which the children had kindly abstained from picking, that Jane and Mary might partake of this treat at Bloomhill feast, she went with them to visit three tame rabbits kept in a little hutch near the gooseberry bushes in the tiny back yard. They were the gift of a neighbouring farmer, for whom the children sometimes did light work, such as weeding, and driving away crows from newly-sown fields. Mary praised the cleanliness of the small hutch, and said she "hoped they would ever be kind to poor dumb creatures. God allows us to use them, and kill them too for our benefit, but not to ill-treat or neglect them. In the blessed Bible, you know, Moses told the children of Israel they were not to muzzle the ox that trod out the corn, for in those days there was no other way of getting out the grain from the chaff. And again the Scriptures say, 'A good man is merciful to his beast.' So, you see, God cares for them as well as for us, and will call us to account when we die, if we torment them or do not give them proper food." The little boys promised to remember all she said, and thanked her very heartily for a few pence

to purchase some oats for these pretty pets as a treat, when weary of their green food, sowthistle, and such like. Then they all returned into the cottage, and they showed her their copy-books, and repeated part of their catechism, promising also not to fall out with each other, or play and fight with bad boys in the street—to be very dutiful to their widowed mother, and never to miss church or Sunday-school *if* they could help it.

Sorely had Mary been missed by them, as well as her mother (whose right hand she was), when she first left home. She was so affectionate, so thoughtful for them all, so forgetful of herself, nothing seemed to go right in her absence for many a long week afterwards. Jane was not equally lamented; she had now and then used her power as elder sister with less gentleness than was agreeable, to the little boys in particular. Still, she too was felt as a loss, and her visit a sincere pleasure. She was far from ill-natured, very lively—a greater favourite with the neighbours than her more reserved, retiring sister Mary—was not deficient in various good qualities, and very pretty. In short, they admired (it may be) sister Jane the most, but loved sister Mary the best. When they came back, they found Jane sitting at the window watching the gay bustling crowd that passed up and down the

street. Mary took a seat by her side, and then their mother could not help seeing with surprise the very great difference between them in appearance. Jane she thought over, and Mary under, dressed. Mary had done what she could to improve the old straw bonnet. She had washed the ribbons and lining, and with a bit of pearlsh tried to restore the colour of the faded purple; but while it looked tidy it also looked shabby. Her mother had expected to see a new one, and she questioned her as to the way in which she spent her money. Mary intended to keep her economy from her mother till she could boast of having saved two pounds; but thus questioned, she openly acknowledged that she had, with her mistress's approbation, begun to lay up small sums in the new Savings Bank, and was now mistress of a pound!

Her mother got up and kissed her, with tears in her eyes.

"These are fine things, indeed, for poor people," she said, when Mary explained that, besides the safety of her money, she would receive interest upon it; "and those that can anyhow put in a few shillings from time to time, ought to be very glad to do so. To be sure, there is a great deal of distress stirring; but what with one charity and what with another, the burden is lightened of almost half the weight. In my young days there

was only the Christian Knowledge Society, that I know of, which issued cheap editions of the Bible, and other good books. These were my main stay in all my afflictions. No National Schools, no Sunday Schools, no Dorcas Societies, no Bible Societies, no Dispensaries, no Savings Banks. When I think of all these helps, I feel quite angry at the wickedness of those restless sinful men who are ever to be found in this world ready to take advantage of any want of work, or other distress of the times, to lead their poor ignorant fellow-creatures astray, by making them discontented with their country and condition."

This seemed such a direct attack upon Richard Simpson's notions, that Jane turned very red, and looked sharply at Mary, fancying she must have told, during her absence, something about her lover; Mary's quiet glance in return convinced her that she was mistaken, and that her mother's speech bore no particular reference to him. In fact, Mary had not mentioned her silly encouragement of this young man, because a few weeks before (after another pettish disagreement) she said to her sister "that she would never more have anything to do with such a wild, good-for-nothing, passionate, idle scamp." Mary would therefore have thought it very unsisterly to betray her former folly, since the courtship was ended. Before, how-

ever, Jane recovered herself, she did receive a rebuke from her mother that quite upset her good humour for the rest of the day. As they still sat together, the anxious mother, who had already been struck by their dress, noticed it again.

"You are sadly fine, dear Jane," she said rather seriously.

"My finery was bought with my own money," she replied, pertly.

"That I counted upon," rejoined the mother, "in my child; but though you have honestly earned the money that bought you such fine things, I do not think you have laid it out well. Whilst you don't pretend to be any other than you are, and do your duty in that station of life which God has thought fit to place you in, you will merit the respect of even gentlefolks; but you must not suppose that can be the case if you aim at dressing like them. I am sorry to see you in a bonnet with tawdry ill-made flowers, and ribbon enough to trim a couple,—flounces along the bottom of your flimsy gown, black velvet boots and a silk spencer. When these things are worn out, as they soon must, pray buy plainer and more seemly ones for you; for, my dear child, you may be sure that when young women appear so far beyond their calling, they are often seen with suspicion, and always laughed at, even if known to have come honestly by their finery, as proud, vain,

silly creatures. You say your mistress likes her servants to be tricked out in showy garments; but most ladies do not think with her, and I wonder they don't all set their faces against such nonsense; if they did, so many of their servants would not turn out a disgrace and plague to them, and, when married, a burden to the parish. I always grieve when young women leave their places, for 'A rolling stone gathers no moss;' but, indeed, if you could hear of one in any other family I should be glad. I don't like to see you set off in this improper way. Mary has shown you she can save out of her very low wages, and I hope you will soon give me the satisfaction of hearing that you are following her good example. To be careful in laying out their wages is the first proof that young women will make prudent wives and mothers, knowing how to turn their husband's hard-earned money to good account."

Jane was too dutiful to make any reply, but she hung down her head, and was glad when the hour came for their return to town; while Mary, proud of her mother's praise, put on her old bonnet with a sort of liking for it. They set off early in the evening, that they might not be out after nine; and, till they were within two miles of the town, had a pleasant walk, for Jane's spirits rose the farther they got from Bloomhill, and she chatted away as usual about the feast, their

old village friends, and respective employments: then the sky became suddenly overcast, the wind began to whistle, and soon a heavy storm burst over their heads. They had no umbrella, and no house was near.

"Oh! Jane, do let us run," said Mary. But Jane was in no trim to run. She was laced to within an inch of her life—her pinched waist resembled a spider's, and her jaunty new boots sorely cramped up her feet. Mary's neat cotton gown and shawl were not in any danger of serious harm. She wore nothing that a shower of rain could spoil,—but it was otherwise with Jane, and she felt sadly grieved. By-and-by the rain fell in pelting torrents; they took refuge under a high hedge, and Mary tried to screen her sister by standing before her, and throwing her own shawl over the green silk spencer, all in vain,—it was soon soaked through; the ribbons of the gay bonnet tumbled down as if they had been dipped in water; her thick clusters of ringlets, on which she had bestowed the half-hour Mary was wearily waiting for her in the morning, hung lank and limp over her face down to her shoulders; her gaudy gown, half-silk, half-woollen, seemed to shrink up; the flaunting fly-about flounces were an inch deep in mud; and the thin-soled, tight-fitting velvet boots clung to her feet and ankles, so as to prevent her from walking fast. To com-

plete her misfortunes, as she pressed close under the hedge for shelter, a bramble fastened on her lace frill, and, the first step she took, tore it to tatters. Whilst in this lamentable condition, a carriage, with two ladies and a gentleman, drove past, and she exclaimed, in a peevish voice,

“Aye, there they ride, laughing at us, when we have as good a right to ride as they have !”

“We don’t know they are laughing at us,” said Mary, who fancied she had, on the contrary, seen a compassionate look glanced from the windows as the carriage passed rapidly by them ; “and as to having as good a right to ride as they, how can that be, Jane ? Their money must be either of their own getting or what their relations got for them ; and I am sure I think I have a just right to what I labour for, or any little matter of clothes or furniture mother or uncle Richard may leave us at their deaths, though no doubt there are many, many poor people in Blooms-hill who want still more than we do.”

“But it is very provoking, nevertheless,” replied Jane, “when one is toiling on foot, wet to the skin, and all one’s things (so hardly earned) quite ruined, to see them riding away at their ease so fine and comfortable.”

“No ; not provoking to me,” returned Mary ; “I should as soon think I have cause

to fret, when a bird flies past me, that I cannot fly, as, when a coach rolls by me, that I cannot ride. Why, at that rate, nobody could ever be happy. A great squire might be envious because he was not a great lord, and a great lord vexed because he was not born a great king. And think of the wickedness of such murmuring !”

Jane was too much mortified to continue the conversation any longer with good nature.

“ I’ve had preachments enough for to-day from mother,” she cried passionately ; “ so I don’t want any more from you, Mary. One thing I know, all I’ve got on me is worth nothing, and I wish I had never been to the nasty feast, that I do. Mother sha’n’t catch me coming to Bloomhill again in a hurry, I can tell her, to get a proper scolding after one’s five miles’ walk there, and such a journey as this on one’s way back.”

Mary pitied her too truly to drop one word of censure or reproach ; her good heart told her that it is not kind when others are in trouble to add to it, although caused by their own folly ; but she was sorry to see Jane’s angry temper all along the road, kicking away with her foot a poor frog, and several dew-snails that the moisture had tempted out of their holes to creep across the path, instead of gently stepping over the harmless creatures, as she herself did. They parted at Mrs. Lester’s door. Mary held out her hand, and

after kindly wishing her good night, said, "I hope you will take no cold, dear sister."

"I dare say I shall catch my death," was all Jane's reply, tearing off the thin shawl Mary had taken from her own shoulders to lend her, and flinging it towards her. "I shall have cause to remember Bloomhill feast, I dare say," she repeated, turning away. "Very likely I shall catch my death." In this frame of mind—wet and weary, and half crying from fatigue and mortification—Jane reached her home. They had been so long on the road that it was getting late; the servants were finishing their supper, and the kitchen-door was already fastened up: her impatient bangs soon brought a young page, and she bolted in. Bursts of laughter and rude jests saluted her entrance.

"Well, what a pickle you are in! A drowned rat! Good gracious me! did they take you for a witch at your famous feast, and duck you in a horsepond? Such a fright to be sure! Oh, my! oh, my! and you so tricked out this blessed morning—two hours a dressing by Shrewsbury clock."

"Pretty Miss Jane," said the saucy footman, coming into the kitchen with the tea-tray, as she sat by the fire trying to draw off her drenched boots, "pretty Miss Jane gets quite fashionable in her ways; she has had, like missus and the other gentry, a shower-bath, I see, and without paying for it."

“No, Mr. John,” said the simpering lady’s maid, who secretly envied Jane’s beauty, and was offended at her presumptuous attempts to rival her in dress, “you’re mistaken for once in your life. Pretty Miss Jane *has* paid for her shower-bath, and pretty smartly too,” catching up as she spoke, with the tips of her thumb and fore-finger, Jane’s dripping silk bonnet, and twirling it round for the amusement of the rest.

Such were some of the uncivil speeches of Jane’s new friends—their consolations in her hour of trouble. Not that they really meant to be very unkind: they were merely thoughtless selfish people, who had not been taught the Christian lesson, to “rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep.” They lived for themselves only. Jane’s loss did not touch their pocket, nor her vexation their hearts; they had found out that her besetting weakness was *vanity*, and thus her forlorn aspect and evident ill humour at the destruction of her finery made them disposed to be merry at her expense. The compassionate precepts of the Gospel—the merciful injunction, “Add not more trouble to a heart that is vexed,” were either unknown or unregarded by them. Burning with resentment, Jane tore out of the kitchen and hurried to bed to weep over her disasters; while Mary, whose humble garments had sustained but little damage, after calmly

offering up her thanks to her heavenly Father for all the blessings and happiness of the day, composed herself to sleep, more and more convinced that she was following the best path for one in her lowly rank of life. "All these smart things may be very right for ladies," thought she, ere her eyes closed, "who can afford to buy others if they meet with a misfortune like poor Jane; but not for those who work for what they wear, and have nothing to look to or depend upon but their own industry and prudence to help them on in the world, or out of difficulties when they fall into them, as the best sometimes do without any fault of their own. Besides, as mother said, a dressy servant is sure to be suspected to come by her finery dishonestly; and God, who looks at the hidden heart, will, I humbly trust, bless my endeavours to live as becomes me in my station. Lazarus went into Abraham's bosom because, no doubt, he had borne his afflictions with patience, and not brought them on by any misconduct of his own." In pursuance of these wise and virtuous reflections, she grew yet more careful to conform to her situation, and fulfil its duties. By her cheerful industry, honesty, and steadiness, she became a great favourite with her mistress, who soon raised her wages, without her asking it, to five guineas a year; and out of that sum, she now contrived to save one pound yearly,

without seemingly feeling it inconvenient. Nor was this all; for she made a rule of adding to her store the trifling presents she at any time received from her master's visitors, justly considering such gifts especially proper to be saved, for they were what she had not expected and could have done without.

Thus happily had passed two years, when she began to perceive a difference in her master's way of living; he saw no company, and her mistress seemed more than ever desirous of saving in her house. Mary could not imagine the reason, but they were such respectable people, she had no doubt it was a good one; and, even if it were not, she considered she had no right to object to their economy; it was her business, as a faithful servant, to try to meet their wishes, so she strove to be more careful where she had command, namely, in the use of soap, candles, wood, coals, &c.—in all those petty articles, in short, which a mistress can hardly entirely control, and must therefore leave to a servant's own uprightness. But her master's affairs were too much involved, as it afterwards appeared, by unexpected losses in business, to be restored by such means. One day her mistress, with tears in her eyes, called her into the dining-room, and told her she was afraid they must part.

“I like you, Mary,” she continued, “and

will raise your wages to six guineas a-year if you choose to stop in my service and undertake all the work yourself, for we can now afford to keep one servant only ; but I will not be so unjust as not to say you are fit for a better place. I will indeed try to procure you one amongst my friends, should you determine to leave me."

Mary was much moved by this melancholy news, and begged she might be allowed to stop, as earnestly as if Mrs. Lester had not made her the offer. She remembered her mother's words, "A rolling stone gathers no moss ;" and though she might have harder labour—more work and less time for herself—she knew what she had to do, and moreover the character of her employers. She was touched at their misfortune, and pleased at the preference shown towards herself over the other servant. All was soon settled between them, and in a few days Mary was maid-of-all-work at six guineas a-year in her first service. Mary showed her usual good sense, as well as good feeling, in resolving to remain where she was. Servants are too ready to think every change will be for the better, till they find out from sad experience that they have let slip the opportunity, which may never return, of making themselves friends, and securing a decent provision for age or sickness.



CHAPTER IV.

'Yet think not thou that Life to thee
Shall pass a summer-dream of bliss !
Clouds and dark storms thy lot may be—
An earnest life, young friend, is this ;
Full of great deeds of life or death—
Full of great scenes of joy or woe—
Full of vast hopes that strive for breath—
Full of great thoughts that heavenward go.

Seek bliss where bliss alone is thine—
Seek it in CHRIST—Eternal Fount !
Then shall thy path with glory shine,
And Hope on holier wings shall mount.

JANE, in the meantime, was going on very differently. Her wages had been raised ; for she proved a clever if not constantly indus-

trious servant, making up for occasional fits of idleness, or absence with her lover, by quickness in getting through her work. However she might wink at or disregard the misdoings of others, her personal honesty was irreproachable in the midst of much temptation to be otherwise. She soon dropped her country dialect to adopt that of the town; and her fine person recommending her to the favour of the worldly family she served, she seemed on the high road to good fortune, when she struck up a sudden friendship with the domestics of a still greater family, who lived about a mile from the town; and, taking advantage of the dismissal of the upper housemaid, offered for her vacant place, and got it before she consulted either her mother or sister on the subject. She was not naturally an ill-natured girl, but quick in her temper and feelings, and resentful. She never forgave her fellow-servants their want of pity for her the night she came back from Bloomhill feast. She really did catch a very bad cold from her shower-bath, as the footman jeeringly called it; and though they had displayed some little concern for her during her illness, she was certain they felt no regard for her. She possessed more discernment than discretion, and was quite aware that people who laugh heartily at the distress of another, and even grow funny at their expense, can be no real

friends at bottom. She was too wise to turn her place into a hornet's nest by an open quarrel; but from that time she secretly looked out for a situation elsewhere. She had another (perhaps) equally strong reason for wishing to remove to *any* other place: a fresh quarrel with her lover—one of those silly quarrels which young persons, like them, of fiery tempers, are so prone to have during courtship: and this time she was resolved to break off all acquaintance with him. Her mother was greatly hurt at her want of duty and love; for the family intended to reside for the future wholly in London, and from what she heard, were little more God-fearing or regular in their habits than the one she quitted. She walked to the town, hoping to prevail upon her to resign the situation, and return home for a few weeks if she could meet with no other when the month's notice she had given was ended. But fruitlessly: the secret desire to leave her late admirer and the country, added to a journey to London—the prospect of living amongst ten domestics, with twelve guineas a year besides tea and sugar, proved far too agreeable to be relinquished at her mother's request; and as it appeared that she had positively engaged herself before she announced her intention to her family, Mrs. Morton, after some delay, gave an unwilling consent, whilst she persisted in withholding her approbation. Her

head teeming with bright expectations, Jane departed, and in about twelve months (after several previous letters penned in the same strain) she wrote to Mary urging her to come up to town directly. She described London as a place full of amusement—where no one could help prospering if once so lucky as to get there. She and her fellow-servants were the liveliest, happiest people in the whole world, wanting for nothing. Servants' parties were rather common entertainments, when their masters were off to balls, or the opera, or theatre. She had been to the play many times, and to other amusing sights of all sorts. Her mistress was too much of a real lady to annoy her servants by coming prying into the kitchen and other offices to look them up; and the housekeeper was very nearly as nice a person to live under. Her wages had been raised, and she boasted of many gifts and perquisites. She finished by begging Mary to lose no time in joining her, as a capital situation in the same street was ready for her acceptance. The family wished for a trustworthy servant from the country, and would wait a week for her, possibly longer. No doubt Mrs. Lester would not stand in her way when she had such an offer made her. Wages fourteen pounds, and promise of increase if she suited.

Mary's usually sober eyes were bewildered by this dazzling prospect. She was

just then particularly desirous of increasing her little stock, for she had a few months before received, with her mother's and Mrs. Lester's consent, the addresses of a very respectable young man: and as they had agreed to wait till they had saved enough to furnish their house, she thought she ought not to refuse it without consulting both him and her mother. The prospect of so much money, with the hope that it would hasten their marriage, had some effect upon her lover; but her mother turned pale at the very idea, and so earnestly entreated her not to leave the country, that she directly resolved to give up all these promised advantages. "You are now just of age, Mary," said she, "and have been in the Savings Bank these five years. What are you worth?" Mary searched in an old red purse for the account she always made out every time she lodged her money, according to the book given her by the clerk, and read as follows:—

First year . . .	£1	0	0	Interest . .	£0	0	7
Second year . .	1	0	0	" . .	0	1	2
Third year . .	1	0	0	" . .	0	1	9
Fourth year . .	2	0	0	" . .	0	3	0
Fifth year . .	2	0	0	" . .	0	4	2
	<hr/>				<hr/>		
	£7	0	0		£0	10	8
Interest . .	0	10	8				
Principal and in- terest for five years	<hr/>				<hr/>		
	£7	10	8				

"Now this sum," continued her mother, when she finished reading, "is honestly,

reputably, and safely got, and if you wait four years longer, will run up to seventeen pounds; and that, with the eighteen pounds James says he shall be able also to lay by in the time, will amount to thirty-five pounds, which will furnish your house nicely. You will then only be twenty-five, which, if I did not know your steadiness, I should think too soon for you to marry. It is well for those who have the means to settle early; but where people depend for bread solely on their own hands, they act wisely not to be in a hurry to take on themselves the care of providing for a family. Do not then, dear child, make undue haste to get money in order to leave service the sooner. You know the Scriptures warn us that they who are greedy of gain shall never enjoy their wealth. You may speedily become rich by going to this grand London; but you may lose your innocence. Snares and temptations beset young persons in great cities, so that many who, when they left their homes, would have been ready to say, ‘Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?’* have ere long fallen into the very sin they hated. ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’† ‘What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’‡ These are reasons sufficient

* 2 Kings viii. 13.

† 1 Cor. x. 12.

‡ Matt. xvi. 26.

for not running into dangerous trials, and there are others. You might not, when you reached London, find your master and mistress such as you leave, or such as you could live with. I have heard that servants in London hardly if ever get to church, live in kitchens under ground, and are, as I said before, subject to temptations which those who live in the country have no notion of. Your end in going there also might not be answered. You might be forced to lay out more money in flimsy dress than you now spend, either by your mistress or fellow-servants, who, if they took a dislike to you for differing from them, would make your place so disagreeable you could not bear to stay in it. Then I am sure you would not be happy to lead the life poor Jane considers so pleasant. My heart aches when I think of her: plays are no amusements for those who are obliged to get their own bread, even if they can see them for nothing; they unsettle them for sober work, to say the least, and I mistrust the gay junketing parties she talks of sadly. I should not think their masters and mistresses knew of such racketing, and I was in hopes no girl of mine would consider it happiness to be never overlooked by a mistress. Those who do no wrong need not fear to be watched." Tears here stopped her speech; and Mary, fondly kissing her, promised never to think of London again.

Mary's first business, on returning home, was to put Jane's enticing letter into the fire, to remove temptation out of sight, and the next to write to Jane to tell her she would not leave her present place, together with a great deal of good advice, which her mother had desired her to send in her name, that it might have more weight. She was thus employed when Mrs. Lester came into the kitchen. Mary had neglected no part of her work, so she was not ashamed of being seen writing, or obliged to shuffle her paper away. She never attempted to do anything for herself while her mistress's work remained undone. She knew her time belonged not to herself, but those who paid and kept her for it. Her leisure minutes only she thought she had a right to spend on herself, and by early rising and care not to get into a dawdling way, it was almost surprising how many spare half-hours she found in the course of a week for needlework or reading.

Mrs. Lester had some suspicion of the cause of her writing, for she had noticed Mary's great thoughtfulness since Jane's letter came; and, willing to know the truth, she fairly asked if she had not been offered a better place in London.

Mary directly said "Yes." She was a straightforward girl, detesting lying lips,—she honestly owned, though with blushes and

some hesitation for fear of giving offence and seeming ungrateful, that she had thought it best to consult her mother before she gave up such a prospect of amending her condition. She then mentioned what passed at Bloomhill. Mrs. Lester, instead of being offended at her desire to go to London, was so much pleased by her good sense and dutiful conduct in giving up her own wishes, that she raised her wages to seven guineas.

“Nor is this all,” she added; “Mary, my husband’s affairs, partly by our late economy, but principally by his high reputation for probity, which has brought him friends willing and able to assist us, are so greatly improved, that we can afford to keep a young girl to help you; and on Sunday next, when you will be rested after your long walk to-day, you may go home again, and fetch your sister. You said some time ago that your mother desired to find a quiet place for her; and, under your care, she will, I doubt not, grow up a good woman, and a useful servant; and, if she behaves well, when you marry she shall take your place.”

Mary was a true sister—her loving heart was fond of all her family. She could hardly thank Mrs. Lester enough, or keep from crying; and, light as a feather with joy, she went a few days afterwards to carry the good tidings home. Little Fanny was half crazy with delight, and their mother scarcely

less happy. A small bundle of necessities was soon got together, and the same evening the two sisters set off to the town. As they walked along, Mary could not help thinking of Jane's disasters on their return from Bloomhill feast some years before,—what a sorrowful journey they had had, how cross poor Jane was at the spoiling of her silk bonnet, and spencer, and velvet boots, and how she could hardly get on, though it rained so fast, because of their tightness. And then she felt so grateful for all her own blessings, and it made her half laugh aloud to mark the difference in her companion now. She found enough to do to keep Fanny's gladness within proper bounds. She was a brisk, civil, industrious, tidy girl, about Mary's own age when she went to place, and eager to do something for herself in the world. Sometimes she ran half-a-dozen yards before her sister, and then ran back again to thank her for all her kindness, and ask what she was to do at Mrs. Lester's. She said she would put the very first money she got into the Savings Bank; and calculated on her fingers, with sundry hums and ha's, and sudden jumps over one finger to another, causing no small confusion in Mary's brain and her own, that she *might* be worth a mint of money by the time she was thirty—that great age in the eyes of all young girls of fifteen.



CHAPTER V.

While sever'd from the source of life,
And all that angels seek to know,
We spend our days in fearful strife,
And tread the paths of death and woe.

WHILST Mary was making her widowed mother's heart leap with joy, and training her young sister to succeed her, Jane was, as she said, leading a very gay, merry life—it could not fairly be termed a happy one. When she boasted of her high wages, and the pleasures she partook of, she forgot to mention that her master and mistress, who

lived up to every shilling they were worth, seldom paid the wages of their domestics oftener than once a year, thus obliging them to run into debt, and pay dearly for what they purchased. She omitted that, though she got many great vails as a housemaid, she was led into so many ridiculous expenses by her dashing fellow-servants, she had never a penny in her pocket ; and, except some gaudy, flashy outside things, hardly any clothes to her back. Then for months she never got to church ; she had often plenty of time to waste in dissolute company at night, when the family was away at balls or parties, or the theatre, but she seldom knew what it was to gain a few hours' liberty, to breathe fresh air in the parks or fields. To add to the dangers of her situation, she was extremely pretty, and her beauty soon exposed her to the attentions of her master's brother, a gay, wicked, well-looking man, who thought, from her flaunting improper dress, and giddy manner, she would be an easy dupe to his arts and her own vanity. Jane, however, had not so far forgotten the teaching and advice of her mother as to fling away her virtue, but she was proud of his admiration ; and being pressed for money to join in the foolish junketings and other extravagancies of her companions, imprudently accepted the presents he made her, without considering that, by such folly and meanness, she might

lose her character as well as by actual vice. She was very far from being an ill-disposed, vicious girl : her chief besetting sin was a love of dress, and her great defects were a want of steadiness and industry. In a quiet, well-governed household, under the eye of a mistress inclined to direct her, she might have been led on to orderly habits, and constant activity. Unfortunately for her, this was not her fate in Mrs. Wilson's service, the first she entered while her character was still to be formed for good or for evil.

Such was the life she was leading, when, owing to late hours, high living, want of fresh air, and a neglected cold, she grew ill, and really not capable of doing the work which fell to her share. For about a week or so, her gay companions paid her some kindly attention, and divided her work amongst themselves ; then they became weary of attending upon her, and her mistress, learning from the housekeeper that she was likely to be sick some time, sent her a month's wages and a discharge. " She could not," she said, " pretend to convert her house into an hospital." Jane, who had no other money, for she always spent whatever she received as soon as she got it, and was too ill to travel far, was removed in a hackney-coach to the dwelling of an aunt of one of the servants, who consented, on the promise of future payment, to nurse her. Fresh air and

rest brought her about in a few weeks, and then, feeling once more strong enough to work, she tried to procure another place. One was soon heard of, very inferior to her last, but she was glad to take it, for now all her little stock of money was gone, and she began to be uneasy at her forlorn situation. What then was her distress, when she found that her folly in encouraging, or, at least, willingly receiving the gifts and attentions of her late master's brother, had been told to her mistress, who, in consequence, refused her a character for modest, maidenly conduct, without which the lady, who inquired for it personally, would not take her into her family.

"I am sorry for you, young woman," she said, when Jane went to know on what day she might come into her house, little suspecting such a misfortune; "but I also have sons and brothers, and a pretty girl, like you, without steadiness, I should fear to bring into a sober household. I hope this will be a lesson to you," she continued, noticing the mixture of resentment and chagrin in Jane's face. "I trust you have only been very silly; and as you told me you came from the country, I counsel you to return thither without delay."

Frightened at this unexpected calamity, she sold a few of her flashy dresses for half what they cost her, and was going to follow

the lady's advice and return home, where her imprudence was unknown, when Richard Simpson, the young man who courted her whilst living with Mrs. Wilson, called upon her. He had found her out by asking for her at her last abode in Seymour-street, and was the bearer of a letter from one of her former companions. They were never fairly engaged, neither had they known anything of each other since Jane went away in a huff to London, but they had what is called "kept company" a long time off and on together. Jane, still feeling weak from her serious illness, lonely and dispirited—her self-respect lowered by the wound to her fair fame—was rejoiced to see the face of an old friend again. So they speedily made up their difference; and she put off her intended journey.

There is a sort of charm in renewing former acquaintanceship in a distant country, and London was such to persons of their class living two hundred miles off, thirty years ago. Railways, which now all but destroy time and space, were on the eve of invention only. Few but the rich travelled in those days. His was the first familiar voice she had heard since her ill-judged visit to the metropolis, that imaginary land of Goshen in the eyes of servants of both sexes, where they but too often find, on reaching it, misery instead of happiness—ruin instead of

riches. She forgot his fierce temperament, former jealousy, and unsettled character—he her whims, flirtations, absurd airs of beauty, and towering spirit. They were both now far away from their native village, mutually in want of friends to speak or advise with: previous liking revived; in short, though he owned he had lost his employ in the country, and was come almost penniless to London to seek work, Jane was at heart so unwilling to return to Bloomhill poorer than she left it, without, too, a character, after her vain-glorious boastings, that she readily accepted the offer he made her a few days after their meeting,—glad, as a married woman, to recover the reputation she had forfeited by her indiscreet behaviour as a single one. They forthwith hired a couple of tidy rooms at Islington, where she then was; and in three weeks more, when the banns were ended, they married.

It was a comfortless affair. They knew nobody but the people she had boarded with; and when she came to settle the account between them the night before, their charges were so extortionate, a violent dispute arose. Jane, with her usual disregard of caution, had made no bargain beforehand; so, after all her contention and quarrelling, she was forced to pay the demand, by giving up many of her best gowns, and other articles, to be allowed to carry away the remainder. These persons,

of course, would not have gone to church to grace her bridal, even had she desired it, and Jane was not of a temper to overlook injuries or slights, or to ask favours likely to be refused. A cup of tea sullenly given, and thanklessly received, was her wedding breakfast—there was no good-bye on either side—the clerk gave her away—and the old pew-opener, in her rusty bonnet and everyday torn cloak, was her brideswoman. They went in a cab to Hyde Park as a pleasure trip, got a wretched dinner off stale heavy pastry and sour ginger-beer at a stall, spent the day in wandering about without an object, or a soul to wish them “good luck,” and walked in the evening, tired and spiritless, to their new home, scantily furnished on credit! Such was pretty Jane Morton’s wedding! Such the way in which she began life as a married woman!

The husband of this thoughtless young creature was a clever, handsome man, some five or six years older than herself, of respectable parentage for his condition in society, and when he pleased to work, got high wages. He was a journeyman cabinet-maker, skilful at his trade, soon procured regular employment, and, for a while, things went on pretty smoothly between them. But such a match was not likely to turn out well in the long run. When the novelty of their new situation was over, both fell back into their old

habits. There was at that period a bad feeling throughout the country: one or two harvests had proved less abundant than usual, bread was in consequence dearer, and from some causes, not to be avoided by the Government, trade was slack. Turbulent men took advantage of this temporary distress to inflame the minds and passions of the poor sufferers. Reform meetings were held in many towns, and London became the chief scene of these utterly useless and reprehensible gatherings. Jane's husband had always had a taste for making one of them whilst in the country: he soon found out men of his own stamp, and went much too often to spouting clubs to mind his business, as business must be minded to make it answer. Jane, on her side, used to the comforts of rich families for many years, began to feel the privations of a poor man's wife. It is a strange but melancholy truth, that people never properly value the blessings they are really enjoying, yet, when lost, regret them so keenly as to forget that they were in company with any drawbacks. Like the children of Israel, who so bitterly lamented the absence of the leeks, and melons, and fish, and flesh-pots of Egypt,* when in the desert, that they forgot the cruelties of their task-masters, and murder of their infants, Jane now remembered sorrowfully the abun-

* See Numbers xi.

dant food of the best quality, the fresh meat and butter, and strong beer, and blazing fires, which, without any call on her pocket, or care on her part, were daily provided for her use. Too late she believed that if she had only been more careful to keep her feet dry, worn warm stockings and petticoats, taken less beer, and more exercise in the open air when she had a spare half-hour instead of carousing in the kitchen, or wasting it in idle gossip in the servants' hall, and been more circumspect in conduct, she would neither have lost her health, nor her place, nor her fair name. Jane had turned over a fresh leaf in the book of life, and discovered, what others as well as herself, and domestic servants in general, are so slow to believe, that every change is not for the better. To make the matter worse, she had very little notion of management, or of employing a penny to the most advantage. She could plait net on her caps, tie up smart bows on her bonnet almost like a milliner, and set herself off to the best advantage when she went from home ; but she was not equally clever in making or mending her husband's things; hated the trouble of washing and ironing, house cleaning, and cooking. They lived, as it is termed, "from hand to mouth," and were always in debt from the first day of their hasty union. There is an old saying that "when Poverty comes in at

the door, Love flies out at the window." Jane and her husband, at least, found it to be a true one. She reproached him with his unsteadiness and idleness—he swore at her for want of carefulness and good housewifery. He traced all his evils to his wife's mismanagement, and the misrule of the Government. She laid all hers on his shoulders. Strangely enough, it never struck either of them that their misfortunes were very much of their own seeking; that if they had steadily remained in their native county, they would not have contracted the hurried improvident marriage they so bitterly repented of; that, in short, previous imprudence on each side had made them begin the world under circumstances so unfavourable that nothing but exceeding industry, and good conduct afterwards, could give them a chance of getting on well together. And in this industry, this good conduct, they were both deficient. He was a vain, and, therefore, a restless man; he pondered much on his own rights, without casting a thought on those of others. His idea of liberty was liberty for one's self, but none for one's neighbour. He was a great tyrant in a small way. Their spirits were high, and their natures hot. They had no sense of religion to teach them that it was their *duty* to bear each other's faults, and lighten each other's burdens. So from sullenness, cold black looks, short snappish

words, and contradiction for the sake of contradiction, they passed, not unusually, to blows, when Jane (as the weaker vessel) was sure to come off the worst of the two.

In a few months they were obliged to seek a cheaper home, and they moved into a small room, with a bit of a dark closet to hide away coals and rubbish, in a dull, unhealthy court, quite in the heart of the city; and there Jane soon knew what it was to pine away for the fresh air and glorious sunshine she had so thanklessly possessed in the country. She longed for Sunday to come round—not to display, as formerly, her smart gowns and bonnets, but to take a stroll in the Parks, a pleasure she had occasionally enjoyed even in her last place, which she had learned to think was full of every earthly comfort as compared with her present life. But she was too far off; she never got beyond some tea-gardens, and wandered there but two or three times, sad, desolate, and alone, for the Sabbath was her husband's grand day of amusement or business with his dangerous associates. A few dusty sparrows, and blackened trees and shrubs, were all she saw to remind her of former pleasant walks in cheerful Yorkshire. Though she had now full time to do so, she never went to church or other place of public worship. She had too often gone there solely from habit, not religious feeling or sense of duty to God, and now she had

lost the habit itself, and was besides ashamed of her daily decreasing and shabby clothing; some of the most necessary articles of which she was obliged to cut up to prepare for a little stranger coming into the world, very likely to prove a sorrowful one to the child, by reason of its parents' folly. She held no communication with her family to comfort her in her loneliness. She wrote to her mother a few days after her marriage, and got a kind answer in return; but though kind, it was clear her mother thought she had taken a very wrong step, and little expected that it would turn out well. She was humbled and partly angry, and did not write again. Postage, also, was very expensive at that period; a letter sometimes nearly cost a poor man his day's wages; and, moreover, as things grew daily worse and worse, she could not bring herself to lay open her sad situation. She brooded the more over her misfortunes from having none to consult or even chat with. Nowhere is solitude more felt than in the midst of a crowd. In the vast city she inhabited, she dwelt a stranger indeed, and friendless and overlooked, as all perfect strangers must ever be. Whilst in her first lodging, and before she fell into extreme poverty, she made one or two attempts to revive her acquaintance with her fellow-servants in Seymour-street, but met with such cold repulses, her pride forbade her to

renew them. The people who took her in as a boarder when she quitted the house, and afterwards quarrelled with her, to remove all the blame of the dispute from their door, had told their own tale—spoke of her as a stingy, ungrateful, bold hussy, wishing to get off, after their great kindness, without paying the expenses of her nursing, and prophesying all manner of evil of her future career. There was nothing in her subdued manner or her appearance to give a very flourishing impression of her means, and they felt no inclination to continue the intimacy. She, on her side, was afraid of making acquaintance with the wretched poverty-stricken creatures, now her neighbours, and they were, doubtless, as suspicious of her and her husband. No cheering “good morning” or “good night” ever greeted her ear from them—no smile from their lips ever gladdened her eyes. When they met by chance in the dirty, stinking yard, common to all the dwellers in the dismal court, it was with averted looks and mutual distrust. But this was not the worst; far sadder than silence, loud oaths and bitter quarrels frequently disturbed the stillness of night, and made her tremble with fear lest she or her husband might somehow get mixed up in these terrible rows.

To persons of ungoverned tempers, nothing is more convenient than to have somebody at hand on whom to fix the blame of every-

thing that goes amiss : Jane and her husband took every possible advantage of their position as man and wife in this particular, and, it must be admitted, Jane had now the most reason to find fault. She was sick of his wild talk and reckless doings, and thought, before he set the world to rights, he had best begin in his neglected workshop : and that, when he swore fearfully shocking oaths at her, because he did not find a blazing fire and a comfortable meal when he came home, cold and hungry, from some out-of-door meeting, he ought to have given her a few shillings before he went, to enable her to provide for her wants and his own. One by one every article of comfort with which they embarked in housekeeping was reclaimed by the owner, because unpaid for, till a hard flock bed, two or three worm-eaten rush-bottomed chairs, a deal table, an old tin tea-kettle, and a little common crockery were all that remained in the miserable apartment.



CHAPTER VI

"Life is flying, life is flying,
All creation groaning, crying ;
Am I sighing, am I trying,
That my death may be no dying ?
When the dying, when the dying,
Makes an end of all the trying,
Oh the sighing and the crying,
If to Christ there's been no flying !"

THINGS were in this state between them ; bitterness in the heart, desolation in the home ; when, one morning, after a violent domestic tempest, during which each had showered on the other torrents of reproach,

he flew off in a dreadful fit of passion to an assembly which was held that day in Spa-fields, being, like many other persons, far more willing to reform mankind in general, than amend himself individually. On arriving there—what between his notions of the rights of the people, and his own angry excited frame of mind—he became so violent that he was apprehended by the constables on duty, and beat one of them so unmercifully, in his struggles to escape, that he was, after a short confinement in prison, sentenced to seven years' transportation.

At this terrible moment, Jane's better feelings came back to her ; her woman's heart was touched, and she went to take leave of him. A fearful farewell was theirs ! The society he kept had made him hourly a worse man : his resentment against her was increased by his doom. He swore "if he out-lived his term, he would never come back to such a lazy, ill-tempered, slatternly woman." Jane, who had been influenced by some sense of duty, and the natural instincts of a female nature, rather than affection, thus provoked, was not behindhand in retorts. Each laid the misery of their ill-starred marriage, as is usual with such characters, solely on the other ; and thus, full of rage, and malice, and bitterness, they parted—and parted thus for ever !

Jane was then very near her time, and having neither money, nor friends, nor credit,

was forced to think of her forsaken home once more. She had no longer the least love for her husband, but she was ashamed of his disgrace, and the day she left London was truly a dreadful day to her.

But how to get home was the great difficulty. The long fatiguing journey must be made on the top of the coach between London and Sheffield,* and not having money enough even for that mode of travelling, she was compelled to walk a considerable part of the way, thankful for an occasional lift in a cart, given her by some humane man who saw and pitied her evident distress; and not seldom forced to beg humbly for a night's lodging in the barn or outhouse of a wayside farmer. Faint and sorrowful, she at last reached Bloomhill. She entered by a retired lonely footpath, hoping to get to her mother's cottage unobserved. She had been walking two hours when she arrived, but it was still early, little more than eight o'clock, and a fine sunshiny morning. The tall trees were bursting into bright green leaves; the birds sang blithely from every budding branch and bush. Starry primroses and blue and white violets peeped out from between the hedge-rows, and pretty pink and white daisies and bright golden kingcups seemed to spring up under her poor sore weary feet. Just as she got to the little grassy lane, close by the high church-

* Railroads were not then invented.

yard wall, the bells suddenly struck up a right merry peal, and out poured a large party: it was a wedding party! Fearful of being seen, she enveloped her thin pale face with her old shabby cloak, and went and sat down on a tombstone a good way off.

"They won't come this way," she thought, "for this gate only leads to the parsonage, and round about to mother's house at the back." But she was mistaken; they all came that way, straight towards her, and oh! what did she not feel when she saw the bride was Mary! Yes; her younger sister was that modest-looking bride, smiling through her tears and her blushes. How Jane gazed on her—how in one moment she beheld all and knew all! Mary's dress was still simple, but handsome: she wore a very pretty light-patterned muslin gown, nicely made, a superior shawl, the gift of Mrs. Lester, with whom she had remained till a month before her union, when she returned home that she might be married from her mother's roof, and assist in furnishing the neat cottage which was to be her future home; and a very pretty straw bonnet, trimmed with a broad white satin ribbon, quite bride-like. Fanny, now a tall comely girl, the image of what Jane had once been in better times, was there as bridesmaid, prettily dressed in a gown like Mary's own; whilst the delighted-looking bridegroom, Mary's arm within his, walked

proudly by her side, clad in a complete suit of bran new clothes, a beautiful nosegay in his button-hole, and sported a pair of York tan gloves. Her mother and two brothers, grown to be nice healthy honest-looking farmer's lads, equally respectable in appearance, with a long line of friends and neighbours, followed. They took the road by the parsonage, to avoid going through the heart of the village. They went close by her—much too full of happiness to notice the weary wayfarer on the broken tombstone. As they passed, she heard many words of joy, and gladness, and blessing. The sudden contrast between her lot and her sister's proved too much for her to bear in her weak spent condition: she watched them till out of sight, and then swooned away. In this state she was found by the clergyman of the parish, as he walked home, after seeing the marriage duly registered in the vestry. Not having the smallest idea who she was, he had her conveyed to the workhouse, where in a few hours she gave birth to a little boy. She was so altered that at first nobody knew her, but in a few days all was found out. Her hapless husband's history had travelled before her: his relations in the neighbourhood, disposed, like him, to lay all the fault on her, had set afloat *his* account of their domestic disasters, turning a deaf ear to everything that told against him—their injustice in this

matter being, as relatives, less blameable than that of mere common acquaintance, who are continually found taking a decided part in private quarrels without hearing both sides of the question. So when it got noised about the village that the gay, sprightly, dressy Jane Morton, now her "poor ill-used husband" was transported, had come back, half starved and half naked, to be confined in the workhouse, few pitied or came to see her, excepting her half heart-broken mother and Mary. They hurried to her bedside, not to taunt her with her past folly—not to upbraid her with the shame brought on them by it, as too many are ready to do when others are in tribulation, and already suffering enough—but to bestow upon her the kind words and kind looks she so much needed in her deep affliction, and all the assistance in their power to give, for they were Christians in practice as well as in name. But Jane, unhappily, felt every affectionate speech and little gift as so many reproaches. Misfortunes act two ways—either they soften the heart or harden it. Jane's connexion with a bad man had injured her mind even more than her fortune. The change in her disposition was even more woeful than all the rest. Adversity, that touchstone by which the real Christian may generally be tested, had brought out in strong colours the seemingly slight defects of her early youth. The sometimes petulant

child — the sometimes perverse girl — the sometimes self-willed haughty young woman, with the blight of her proud hopes, was grown habitually peevish, irritable, and obstinate.

When she recovered, she made an attempt at returning into service again, and Mary took the child out of the workhouse and nursed it tenderly herself; but Jane did not long continue this prudent course. She found herself, as a deserted wife, with a husband a felon, very miserable amongst other servants, young and free, and full of hope for the future—that future so dark and gloomy to her! She soon went back to Bloomhill, where her mother and Mary agreed to pay the rent of a small cottage for her, and there she picked up a few stray pence by trimming caps and bonnets for her humble neighbours. This, with the parish allowance, and many sisterly helps from Mary, enabled her to get on, though she had hardly enough to keep herself and boy from nakedness. A still worse prospect lay before her, for the boy (though a fine sharp intelligent child) early showed his father's hot-headed disposition, and her own thoughtless character. She petted, and scolded, and beat him by turns, till every year he grew less and less manageable, and more disobedient, especially after his grandmother's death, which happened when he was about four years old. From that time, having no longer any check

on her, Jane gave herself up to sloth, spending her time chiefly with a parcel of gossips as talkative and lazy as herself.

The grand object of life with Jane and others of her stamp would seem to be marriage; and, disappointed in that, they weakly and wickedly reject happiness in every other shape. Having no longer any motive for dress, she became, from the flaunting giddy girl, who believed she could never spend time enough on her pretty face, and tall, straight, well-formed figure, a listless dirty dawdle. Her poor neglected boy might always be known by his unwashed face, ragged clothes, naked feet, and rude bold manner: her dwelling, by its dingy broken windows, stuffed with paper and rags, nasty floor, and forlorn look. It was in vain Mary and her mother had earnestly striven to bring her into a better way of going on; and, as the first step towards worldly comfort, to lift up her heart in prayer to God. To lift up her voice in complaints to her fellow-worm was more to her inclination: and she seldom let slip any opportunity of murmuring at her fate. Time fled on, but failed to bring balm to her griefs. How could it, with no care but for the things of this world, none for the next? "I am very miserable," frequently rose to her lips; but the penitent cry that would have brought consolation—"God be merciful to me a

sinner, for Jesus Christ's sake,"—never ! From Mary she would not endure a single word, and received her mother's admonitions with sullen indifference. She was envious of her sister's well-merited prosperity, and would not believe that she had caused all her own sorrows and trials herself. She talked loudly of her "bad luck and bad husband," and of Mary's better "chance." Ever heedless and fond of pleasure since she had lived in gay families, where it was deemed clever and spirited to make a jest of everything serious, and with a husband who was almost an infidel, she had learned to sneer at all those who went to church without any object but to obey God's commands, and who proved by their actions that they really loved and feared the Almighty Being in whose hands are the issues of life and death. Sometimes, however, when she went to beg or borrow anything of Mary, and saw the clean sanded floor of her house, without a print of dirt; its oak table so bright it might have served for a looking-glass; its beautiful clock, showing the rising and setting of the sun, and the moon's quarters; its neat dresser, the shelves well filled with shining rows of earthenware, pewter, and glass; its nice whitewashed walls, hung round with coloured prints of our blessed Saviour's miracles, sufferings, and death; its little bookcase, containing a large handsome

family Bible, in which her marriage and the births of her children were duly recorded; the tracts and many other good books published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; or peeped into her pantry and saw her fitch of bacon, barrel of home-brewed beer, and wholesome cheese and bread, she felt remorse as well as bitterness. She knew she had enjoyed double the advantages which had fallen to her sister's lot, was older, much prettier, and began life with higher wages. And what was she now? That she did not pine in a workhouse was in great measure owing to the generosity of this very sister. As it was, she received parish pay at less than thirty years of age, was burdened with a wild fatherless boy, who promised to be a plague instead of a pleasure, and her husband was wearing out his miserable life a poor disgraced convict. Mary's husband, on the contrary, after diligently doing the work of the day, might always be found labouring in their nice garden, well stocked with useful herbs and potatoes, and garnished by many a pretty flower; or nursing his sweet little infants, always as clean and as neat as those of a lady, if not so smart.

Those habits of industry and carefulness which had made her so valuable as a servant, did not leave Mary when she became a wife. She had known the comfort of being above the world. She continued to rise betimes

every morning, doing whatsoever her hand found to do with all her might, being fully aware "that he that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster;" and she was always ready to increase their little store by working in hay-time and harvest in the fields, or turning her knowledge as a domestic servant to account by going out occasionally to assist her rich neighbours as a charwoman. Some of her acquaintance thought her stingy and money-loving by so doing, and others "wondered how she managed—they could not leave their poor children!" Mary laughed at the first, and told these fond foolish mothers she found it cheaper to pay a poor old decent widow a few pence a-day to take care of them in her absence, than to stay lounging on that pretence at home.* And, moreover, had she wished it, there were many worthy persons who would have been glad in this way to return her little acts of kindness to them; for she was always ready, in case of sickness or trouble, with her aid, and not seldom did she bestow on the less prosperous than herself all those little deeds of charity, which, like the

* Mary was in advance of her times. Infant schools were not dreamt of in 1830. Ragged schools, Penny Postage, Public Baths and Washhouses, with many other plans for bettering the condition of the poor, might now be added to Widow Morton's list, as proofs that the wants of their poorer fellow-creatures are cared for, and attended to, by the richer classes of society.

cup of cold water, given in the name and spirit of our blessed Lord and Saviour, shall not go without their reward, even in this our temporary stage of existence.

My readers, from this tale learn to take warning by the fate of the vain worldly-minded Jane, and follow the example of Mary, who, from a poor fatherless girl, with scanty clothing, and a mother partly owing her support to parochial relief, rose, by her good conduct, to be the head servant of a respectable family,—was the means of providing for one sister, was a blessing to her mother, and by her prudence, management, and humility, saved (in about ten years), out of wages which at first were only four pounds, and never reached to more than seven guineas, seventeen pounds! This sum, with the eighteen pounds saved by her lover in the four years' courtship, amounting altogether to thirty-five pounds, enabled them to furnish their house, buy a pig and some small brewing vessels. Finding he had still some hours to spare after the day's regular labour was ended, Mary's husband, encouraged and strengthened by her example, took a bit of land of a neighbouring farmer; and though he paid a high rent for it, found that his own industry and his little children's, as they grew up, made it a profitable concern as a potato ground. Thus did she, "like a wise woman, build up her house," while Jane,

“like a foolish one, plucked down hers.” They continued to grow prosperous and happier, and their children, trained to labour and piety, became blessings to them. Be not, however, too confident in your own efforts; be not deceived,—all this cannot be done trusting only to your own strength. Without the fear of God before your eyes, and the commands of his Son written on your heart, you will never be steadfast in well-doing. All earthly considerations are forgotten, when exposed to temptation, unless you pray for the grace of God to enable you to overcome them. Unless you seek his aid, and implore his blessing, you must not expect to succeed in any undertaking. Remember that, “Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” (Psalm cxxvii.) And, should you sometimes feel weary or desponding in your struggles to get through this troublous world, call to mind the comforting words of our Divine Guide and Saviour, who promises unto all that come to Him rest and peace here, with eternal happiness hereafter.



PART II.

CHAPTER I.

“By cool Siloam’s shady rill,
How sweet the lily grows !
How sweet the breath beneath the hill
Of Sharon’s dewy rose !

“Lo ! such the child whose early feet
The paths of peace have trod ;
Whose secret heart, with influence sweet,
Is upward drawn to God !”—HEBER.

A WILD gloomy night had followed a dull cold day, when a lonely woman, seated in a desolate cottage, rose up suddenly from before the handful of half-dead coals feebly burning

in a rusty grate, and went to a small casement window. She drew back impatiently a little scanty torn curtain, and looked out. October had come in with November's cold; and, but for a rising moon, often hidden by heavy clouds sailing rapidly over its pale face, it would have been quite dark.

There was nothing to see, yet she remained standing, her own aspect and thoughts wild and gloomy as the scene without. She was between forty and fifty, with the remains of great beauty in her face and figure, but she was a ruin—a wreck of what she had been—her eye dimmed by care—her cheek pale—her forehead wrinkled, and her once bright glossy hair fast turning to grey, starting from her soiled tumbled cap, hung neglected and matted half over her stooping shoulders.

“I'll give it him this time,” she muttered, as, after long waiting, she heard a loud thump at the door. She took down a wooden bar across it—the latch was lifted up, and a tall youth about nineteen entered hastily and sideways—his back to the wall, and lowering his head to avoid the blow he saw she was preparing to give him. He strode quickly to the fire—she darted towards him with her fist clenched.

“Mother,” said he, “keep off: if you hit me, I'll hit you again.”

“You idle undutiful rascal,” she exclaimed, “would you dare to strike your own mother?”

"Yes," said he doggedly, "if my own mother treats me like a child. I've had enough, and too much of such motherly behaviour, and I'll stand it no longer. I won't be cuffed any more!" As he spoke he seated himself in the crazy chair she had quitted, and threw on the dying embers a heap of furze scattered over the untidy floor: in a few moments a bright blaze lighted up the dreary room; and his mother, looking in his face, saw by his flashing eye and lowering brow that this was no time for putting her threats of punishment into execution.

"I want some supper! Anything to eat?" he said, after a silence of many minutes.

"Eat! No! Where should I find food to feed a lazy lubberly scamp like you? This is Saturday night, and you haven't done a whole day's work all the week. Where have you been sliving till this time o'night—near eleven."

"Where I'll go again if you don't give me some victuals directly."

"You may!" she answered angrily.

"Then I'll be off to aunt Mary's."

"Do, and find the door shut in your face! They've been in bed these two hours at least; but no doubt they'll get up and let you in, seeing your good conduct has made you such a favourite there."

He had risen from the chair and was near

the door. "Don't taunt me," he replied, fiercely turning back, "or you may repent it. I've heard that your tongue drove my father mad."

"It is false!" she screamed. "If he was mad, he was driven mad by his own idleness and wickedness, and got his deserts at last. And you're walking in his ways. Get along to your aunt Mary's or wherever you like, for you shall not stop here to aggravate me." Furious with passion, she seized upon an old brush standing near her, and sprung towards him. He leaped aside, and the brush fell heavily on the deal table: old and dry, the head snapped off, leaving the handle in her possession. Again she came towards him—he met her half-way—snatched the stick from her grasp, and, brandishing it right and left with one hand to ward off her approach—flung open the door with the other and fled.

She went and sat down once more before the fire—rage, and resentment, and mortification so filled her heart, that she forgot all else—did not see the darkness within—did not hear the pelting rain without. A sensation of extreme chilliness, and a faint light glimmering through rents in the window-curtain, recalled her to the consciousness that the night had passed away, and the morning of Sunday was breaking.

"Mary has no doubt let him in—she's

almost as fond of him as of her own, in spite of his bad behaviour. She mostly takes his part (right or wrong) against me, and the last time we quarrelled told me that I ought to be more forbearing with him now, seeing he is come to man's estate. I dare say she'll blame me when she hears of this night's row, and my bidding him go—or, turning him out into the street as she will please to call it—so, though it was shamefully provoking to say what he did about his good-for-nothing father, I suppose I'd best let this drop when he comes in." Thus thinking, she crept up the rickety ladder that led to a low unceiled room under the tiles, lighted by a single pane of glass in the roof, where she slept, threw herself on the wretched pallet bed, dressed as she was, and, worn and weary, fell into a deep sleep. She was roused from this heavy slumber by the sound of the church-bells, and hurrying down she made the fire, and set on the kettle.

"He'll be sure to be here to his breakfast before the church-goers are stirring, not to be seen in dirty clothes by them," she thought, as she placed two chipped cups and a cracked black teapot on a clothless table. Next she took from a shelf in a dark closet, where she kept her coals and all sorts of rubbish, half a loaf of brown bread, a slice of salt butter wrapped in a bit of greasy newspaper, a modicum of coarse sugar in a

mug, a pinch of tea in a shabby battered tin canister, and a little milk taken the evening before; for, as she was seldom up soon enough to buy her daily penny's-worth in the morning, she took it overnight. When all was ready she had time to wonder why he did not come; and, by-and-by, a doubt came to disturb her. "If aunt Mary should not have let him in, where had he spent the night?" She watched the clumsy hour-glass, her cheap substitute for a clock, till its waning sands told nearly the lapse of another hour; then impatiently snatching down the shabby bonnet and shawl that hung upon a peg in one corner, left the house. Her proud spirit calmed by rest, she feared he might not have been so safely housed as with aunt Mary. She remembered now, what she forgot in her angry fit, that he had recently made some very disreputable friendships, and had joined a sort of tap-room club, kept up by a dozen idle fellows, all older than himself, held in a wayside public-house of indifferent reputation. Notwithstanding her violence the previous night, *she was a mother*, and he was her only child; and she regretted that she had, by reminding him of some strong rebukes given him a few weeks before by his aunt and uncle, (since which he had not been to visit them) perhaps prevented him from seeking shelter in their house—his ark

of refuge on several occasions after some such storm as the present, till, his wrath and her own cooled down by time and sleep, he returned back to his home. She knew that he was very fond of his aunt, who had nursed him in his infancy; and, after she became herself the mother of a numerous family, still showed him much affection, until the fear of his enticing her own sons into evil habits and evil company had forced her to treat him with a degree of coldness equally painful to both. Jane was fully aware how much she should mortify him by recalling this to his memory, and he was equally sure of exasperating her when he made mention of her differences with his father, yet the ungoverned pair, yielding to their mutual passion, felt a malignant pleasure in thus tormenting each other, reckless of future consequences, in the gratification of their present fury.

Some six or seven years before, when the church and vicarage underwent many repairs and alterations, and a new school-room was built, a few spirited right-minded persons bethought themselves that a small house, suitable for the abode of the clerk, would be a proper finish to these improvements. He belonged by his appointment to the church, though holding an inferior place in it; and, acting on the apostolic command, that all things appertaining to the service of God should be

set in order, a liberal subscription was raised for this purpose. It happened that the cottage in which the sisters formerly lived with their widowed mother was empty, and from its nearness to the church fixed upon as a good situation. Enlarged and altered to give it the look of forming a part of the church establishment, it was so improved that to none but previous inmates could the pretty little building with its gable ends, its neat iron fence, and gravel-walk leading up to its covered porch, be recognised as the humble cottage of widow Morton.

Wrapping her rusty cloak close round her, and pulling down her faded bonnet more over her sallow face, the anxious woman crossed the churchyard as the nearest and most retired way she could go. She walked very fast, but her eye (almost unwillingly) fell on a small upright tombstone under the shelter of an aged yew-tree, all hedged about with flowers: the little plot was gay, even at this advanced season, with Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums; and the neatly-clipped box border marked it as one dutifully cared for by pious hands. The grave was her mother's, but no floweret owed its sweet birth to her. Respect for the dead, that sentiment so full of good to the living, was beginning to make itself felt in the village under the teaching of its Pastor; and, among the little mementos of affection for the departed, this of her mother,

planted years after her death by a sister's hand, and cultivated by her young family, was one of the earliest and prettiest. The few heavy showers that had fallen in the night rendered the air soft and balmy. It was a lovely Sabbath morning, holy and hushed, save that a little choir of birds, nestled in the old yew and sycamore trees, were straining their throats as if in very emulation they poured forth their matin hymn of praise, thanksgiving and gladness, ere the anthems of man should ascend from the grey walls of the ancient sanctuary to their mutual Creator. A bright autumnal sun lighted up the richly-painted glass of the finely-sculptured, narrow lancet-windows, and lent fresh beauty to the many-coloured ever-greens and flowers that adorned the tasty garden in which stood the dwelling of the parish clerk—husband of her sister Mary! She hurried on; and, full of strange sad thoughts, reached the door. A little dog kept watch on the step—he knew her—looked in her face, and jumped nimbly down in prudent avoidance of a possible kick. Without lifting the shining brass knocker, she pushed the door wide open and rudely entered.

What a contrast to the home she had just quitted met her restless gaze. The green stained walls of the large light room were decorated with many pretty pictures in neat black frames. The gem of Mary's bridal

home, her inlaid clock, stood between a nice chest of drawers and a bureau, on which lay an open Bible and Prayer-book, in testimony that the clerk had already been looking over the services of the day. All three were polished by the use of that domestic oil—which far exceeds in brightness any purchased at the chemist’s—the oil of labour. A few book-shelves amply filled, a scarlet geranium in full bloom at the window, and the spotless boarded floor sprinkled with white sand, gave the last finish to its clean cheerful aspect. Near to the blazing fire were Mary and her husband at breakfast, surrounded by five goodly sons and daughters, whilst two younger children sat on low stools close to the table. A sleek tabby cat, the petted descendant of Mary’s favourite pussy of former days, lay purring on the white hearth now partially hidden by a strip of neat carpet. A fragrant smell of coffee, and abundance of good bread, and milk, sugar, and fresh butter, neatly laid out on the coarse, but snow-like tablecloth, told the easy circumstances of the family—each member, but the mother and two little ones, already nicely dressed for church.

“Did he come to you last night to beg a lodging?” she asked, before they could speak from surprise, in a husky voice, as her eye, glancing over the happy party, failed to see him whom she sought.

“No,” replied Mary rising, too well comprehending the meaning of the question.

“Were there any knocks, or shakes at the door, or trampling of feet about?”

“No!” they all answered in a breath. “Sit down and take a cup of warm coffee with us, it will do you good,” said Mary, pitying her forlorn look.

“No, no, I’m neither hungry nor thirsty, I didn’t come for breakfast,” was the ungracious answer; and without a word more she turned her back on them, slammed the door after her, and hastened through the garden and churchyard to her miserable home.



CHAPTER II.

“Not many lives, but only one have we,—
One, only one.
How sacred should that one life ever be,—
That narrow span !
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil !”

SUCH were the abodes, and such the situation of the two sisters who twenty-five years before left Bloomhill to seek service in the neighbouring town of ——. The younger sister was Mary, and the elder Jane Morton. Yes, that peevish, dirty, slatternly, careworn

woman was once known as "Pretty Jane Morton,"—the beauty of the village—the pride of that fond mother whose last resting-place she had scarcely dared to look at as she passed. Their previous history has already been told, and a few words will suffice to bring it down to the present period. By a constant course of good conduct, Mary's husband, when the old clerk died, was deemed the most eligible man in the village to fill up the vacancy. Not above being taught even by his own children, he had so much benefited from the lessons they received at school, repeated to him during the long winter nights, that he had learnt to speak and read remarkably well—wrote a clear bold hand, and could count sufficiently for such an office. But it was to his private character, and theirs, mainly, that he owed this great advancement in life. He ruled his family with a kind yet firm hand—was an affectionate husband, fond father, and good neighbour; whilst his wife and children were patterns of neatness and industry, beloved and respected by all who knew them.

Jane's wretched story requires more to clear it up. Nearly twenty years had passed away since, a weary foot-sore outcast, she reached Bloomhill, and seated on a tombstone witnessed unseen her sister's bridal procession, to be carried fainting from thence

to the workhouse, where, unrecognised by her former acquaintance, she gave sorrowful birth to this very son for whom she was now enduring so much uneasiness. She was a wife, yet no husband was near to mitigate by his labour or love the sufferings of maternity—no mother or sister to aid her in her hour of peril and danger—for they knew not she was there. She never heard from her husband after their terrible parting, nor of him but indirectly. She had, however, reason to believe he was alive. He was known from the colonial returns to have completed his term of punishment (seven years' transportation) in good health, and was said to have then gone up the country; but, whether he became a better or a worse man—whether he had turned a dangerous bush-ranger, a peaceable domestic servant, or maintained himself by his trade, remained a secret, at least to her. Some vague reports hinted at renewed misconduct, and increased punishment; others, again, that he had repented of his past misdoings, and was earning his bread honestly. If he ever wrote to his brothers and sisters (who lived about ten or fifteen miles from Bloomhill) they never said so to her: while she on her side was too proud and resentful to ask any questions about him, nor did they in any way step forward to help her to maintain the child. They were selfish people, more ashamed of the dis-

grace entailed on them as a family, than grieved at the sin and sorrow brought on himself and innocent offspring; and found some comfort to their mortified pride in laying it on the shoulders of his wife. To her temper and her mismanagement, they traced all his faults; they had also children of their own to support, and as their poor little nephew grew up, it must be confessed, they had great reason to expect he would turn out much the same as his father before him. Every mishap in the village was, as a matter of course, ascribed to him, till the contrary was proved. He was the terror of all the stray dogs and cats, ducks and poultry, wandering from their own strict limits. Showers of stones, sent with faultless aim, soon made them run, and fly hurry-scurry to some place of refuge, their helter-skelter retreat affording the highest delight to the prankish author of their alarms. The donkeys turned out on the common and into the by-lanes, pricked up their ears and switched their tails at the sight of him; for when disposed for a ride, he flung himself on their saddleless backs, grasped their necks in his vigorous arms, and his feet supplying the want of whip and spur, he cantered many a mile, seldom returning them, panting and perspiring, before evening. Strong and agile, few garden walls were too high for his scaling. Quick of eye, and nimble of foot, he usually escaped

detection at the time, and his neighbours pitying the fatherless boy (considering him rather mischievous than vicious), he was rarely called to account for these faults afterwards, or taught, by proper reprimands and punishment, that they were serious offences, which, if persisted in, would deprive him of future character. In fact, at this period of his career, though few prophesied much good of him, the little scapegrace was rather a favourite than otherwise in the village: he was a fine active healthy lad, full of fun and frolic, ready to resent, but as ready to forgive, with a bright intelligent face, and frank open-hearted manner; gifts and qualities which in the estimate of the unthinking often serve to gloss over many a defect. Ungoverned at home, he would not submit to rule elsewhere; got turned out, or turned himself out, of every school to which he was sent by his aunt or mother; and when he had passed from boyhood to manhood, earned a slender, uncertain, unsettled living by day labour, often without employment, either because he could not, or would not work. He resembled both parents—was good-looking, clever, and not ill-disposed—but vain, idle, proud, and hasty. For his mother he felt neither respect nor regard. He had picked up among his school companions and fellow-workmen just enough of his father's history to think she was chiefly, if not entirely, to blame.

Jane's repulsive manner and untidy fireside made her no favourite with his comrades. He learnt from them that his lost father was a smart handsome young fellow when he married her; could read and write like any gentleman, and was skilful at a genteel trade by which he could earn a great deal of money; a little wildish, but no harm in him. The crime for which he was banished to a penal settlement was none in their eyes, rather the contrary. "Beating a constable, who wanted to take him into custody for saying a few windy words, was a proof of pluck, only served the rascal right." The son of a widow instinctively clings to his sole remaining parent with somewhat of the noble feeling of giving as well as receiving support; but the son of a living father naturally turns to him for guidance and assistance in the struggle of life. Many an obstinate battle, arising out of the opprobrious epithets flung at him by angry playmates, as the son of a convict, had he fought in boyhood with lads much his superior in age and strength; and as he verged to manhood, he often dreamed of trying to find out whether his father still lived, and where. But his paternal aunts and uncles,—for his grandfather and grandmother did not long survive their son's disgrace,—were scattered by marriage into distant towns, and then pride ever interposed to forbid his seeking those who knew where

he was, and would not seek him. This desire increased with his growth; and comparing his own degraded position with that of his young cousins, his dirty hovel with their nice house, his mother's capricious outbreaks of ill-humour—her tart reproaches when he committed any juvenile fault, with the equable temper and gentle admonitions of his aunt Mary, he hourly became less willing to render her due honour as his parent. Disgusted with his disorderly home,—the very rent of which, he blushed to think, was paid by his aunt,—he was seldom to be found there but when he wanted to eat or sleep, and spent latterly all the time not engaged in work with other thoughtless youths and men of the worst stamp in the neighbourhood. They had not yet taught him to drink, or swear, or gamble to any extent, but he was fast corrupting in mind, for there is no standstill in vice. The most powerful check on him was the grateful love he felt for his aunt, and something of a warmer feeling towards his cousin Maria, two years younger than himself, but tall and womanly, pretty, modest, and industrious; this had hitherto preserved him from any intimacy with the vile women who are, alas! to be found in villages as well as towns, and made him feel more keenly the sort of separation which had taken place between them a few weeks before this last dispute with his mother.

With a heart a prey to many griefs, mingled alarm for her boy, envy at Mary's prosperity, and shame at her own debasement, Jane pulled the latch of her door, half hoping to see him sitting by the fire eating his breakfast; there was nothing to tempt robbery in her den, and excepting at night (not always then, so careless were both), was the old door, which in fact might have been kicked open by a strong foot, ever fastened. He might have come back in her absence; but everything remained as she left it, nothing showed that the room had been entered, nothing could be seen or heard. All was still as the grave. A sense of trouble and unhappiness never felt before, oppressed her; a foreboding of coming evil, she knew not what. She swallowed a cup of cold weak tea, and then shoving the little three-legged table into a corner, without removing anything, sat down behind the curtain of her small dusty window, to watch the people going to church. The very first person she saw was her brother-in-law, dressed in his gown of office, crossing the opposite churchyard (of which she had a distant view) from his own gate, walking with the grave measured tread of one not only proceeding to the house of God, but conscious that he had a part to perform in its sacred ceremonies, as well as there to offer up his own personal prayers and thanksgiving. And as she looked

on him, her pale cheek flushed with anger, for she disliked him, because she knew, in despite of his efforts for Mary's sake to hide it, he despised her. Next came the Sunday-school children, two and two, the boys headed by the master, and her eldest nephews as monitors; the girls, by the mistress, and her niece Maria, who was a teacher, looking so nice, so pretty, so modest, that she felt she could not have desired a sweeter bride for her wayward son, one more likely to win him from his wandering habits, or one he would have liked better. Strange feelings came over her as she gazed on this youthful procession, and marked the care with which each little one had been prepared for Divine Service. They were mostly shabbily dressed, but the coarse, stiff, white collars of the boys, the tidy tippets and shawls of the girls; their faded and scanty, but neat untumbled frocks, with the clean ruddy hands and faces, shining hair and shoes of all, showed the loving heart of many a fond parent. And she remembered, perhaps for the first time remorsefully, that Richard had left the Sunday-school mainly because his proud spirit was chafed by being the worst clad in it. Then acquaintance passed her door without end,—if she could number as acquaintance those who now hardly spoke or moved to her. The bells had hitherto sent forth a merry peal; now one slowly tolling informed her

that the clergyman had taken his place in the sacred edifice. Then came a still solemn silence, and she was left at full liberty to brood uninterrupted over her hapless lot. Every two or three minutes she lifted up her agitated face to the door, praying in her manner of prayer (fretful ejaculations, not reverential supplications), that he would come back now the street was empty, and none to remark him. But in vain. Yet there she sat, unable to move, till the air was again filled by the sound of voices, and busy tread of feet. As the congregation poured out of church they formed little groups, or fell into cosy chat with some one relative or friend, and came talking and smiling past her door, like persons who, having fulfilled a great duty conscientiously, were now enjoying its reward in that inward peace of mind which ever follows the right performance of religious worship. Once more all was silent in the street, but numbers of small spiral columns of smoke from the low chimneys told that, within their homes, many a warm Sunday's dinner was prepared, and many a happy family gathered together to eat it. Faint and sick with watching, uneasiness, and want of food, she left the window, and after taking one bit of dry bread, went up the ladder, threw herself on her bed, and tried, but could not sleep. Once more the spirit-stirring bells, and bustle and buzz of

the walkers and talkers going to afternoon service, broke upon her weary listening ear; once more she knew psalms were singing, and prayers ascending in which she had no part, and once more she heard the worshippers returning to their homes in gladness. There she still lay in loneliness and sorrow, unpitied, unheeded, unwanted, unremembered; but where was he? Never had they been apart for so long a time since she took him, a lovely sprightly baby of a year and a half, from Mary's care, after she gave up domestic service, to begin housekeeping on parish pay, and the assistance of her family. She had beaten him many a time, and he had resisted and bellowed like a young bull, but he had never threatened her before the last night; and, unresentful in temper, he was generally ready to meet her half-way in a return to civil words and kindly offices. Some alteration in this respect had lately come over him; he was more sullen than in his younger days, when, glad to see her in good humour again, he would roar out his little songs at the top of his voice; imitate Punch and Judy, and do a hundred household jobs to please her, and gratify her besetting sin—slothfulness. He would fetch her water from the public pump, break her sticks ready for use, and tell her, with a roguish shake of his curly head, and twinkle of his dark laughing eyes, that he would never plague

her again—no, never—till the very next time.

But in domestic life makings-up only lead to fallings-out, as certainly as night succeeds to day, whilst the character of the parties remains the same—*that* must be altered—there must be a change in that, or strife ceases only for a season. This is not all, nor the worst of family jars—they usually gain in strength, as well as frequency, till all love is lost, and hatred comes in place. Jane's animal affection for offspring underwent, however, no material diminution. As he grew up he naturally formed other ties; but parental instinct, especially maternal, is stronger than filial; and in spite of these violent quarrels, to her he was still the same—her only child—the sharer of her daily life—the hope of her future age. Eighteen years had they spent together, literally for better for worse. When we look back to eighteen years it seems as a tale that is told; but its length may be surely measured by the changes it has made in our acquaintance. How many with whom "we took sweet counsel together, and walked in God's house as friends,"* have departed to that land whence no traveller ever returns! How many, from the vicissitudes of life, gone far away! How many, sadder still! are estranged from us by the petty disputes, and jealousies,

* Psalm lv.

and clashing interests which so often tear apart those we then reckoned as our fastest friends! In the nineteen years Jane had grumbled on since, a weary, way-worn, foot-sore prodigal, she came from London to Bloomhill, many of her early playmates and the companions of her girlhood had left the village, or rested from their labours under a turf-bound hillock in the churchyard, where they had so often sported with her—some were too disdainful to speak to her now; others merely distantly civil; the rest improvident (like herself) or luckless, sheltered in the Union of a neighbouring town. There was nothing about her to tempt strangers to begin any intimacy. Her visits to Mary grew hateful to her jaundiced temper. Resisting the admonitions of her minister, and scorning the entreaties of Mary, she finally ceased to go to church—her downward course was then sealed, and little by little her son became the sole link that united her by the chain of affection to the rest of the world.

The peculiar feeling of tenderness between the widow and her only son, so pathetically narrated in the touching story of the widow of Nain, was hers. She was more than a widow—the grave might not have closed over her husband, but if alive, he lived not for her!

A rap at the door, and then a quick step

within, at last gave her a gleam of hope; she raised herself eagerly up, and called out cheerfully, "Richard, my lad, is that you?"

"No, Aunt,," said a shrill girlish voice; "it's me, little Nanny. Mother's love, and sends you one of our nice Sunday cakes for cousin Dick's supper; for she says no doubt but he'll be sure to come home when all the people are gone to bed."

"You may set it on the table," was the thankless answer. "No, stop a bit," she cried, "I'll come down directly."

"Can't stay a minute, Aunt, dear; father bid me not stop, he's going to read us a beautiful Sunday-night book, all about the wonderful birds, and beasts, and great fishes, and trees, in the Bible, when I come back; and, besides, we've heard nor seen nothing of cousin Dick, and it's getting dark."

The door clapt to as if the child (afraid of detention) had made an escape from something she did not like, and the disappointed woman's aching head sunk again on her hard pillow. But not to sleep. Anxiously listening for Richard's return, she could only close her eyelids. In that sad solitude there was no interruption to the feverish wanderings of the perturbed spirit. The scene of the morning arose fresh to her memory, and she went back to the time when she and Mary (between whom there was now so wide and deep a gulph) dwelt together in

that very house of which Mary was now mistress, so changed and beautified that some good fairy (such as they had read of in their infancy) might have tapped it with a wand to turn it into a little palace. Mary's favourite trees, now twined over the carved porch, alone marked it as the sheltering roof of their humble mother; and she groaned as her fancy pictured the meanness and discomfort of her own abode. She forgot that when Mary first hired the cottage for her, fifteen years ago, it was a small but not incommodious one for a young woman and an infant child. "A stitch in time saves nine," and "a nail in season shows reason," are homely truths Jane had heard in her youth, but failed to profit by. She always found a lion in the way when anything had to be cleaned or mended; so she put off the evil hour to another hour, and thus dawdled on till constant untidiness and neglect had brought her dwelling to the state it was in. The nasty yard, with its unsifted cinders, broken crockery, egg-shells, and cockle-shells, potato-parings, and the like, was a decent little garden boasting many pot-herbs, with a currant-bush or two, a few flowers, and a corner fenced off for a regular dust-hole. Most of the former were dead for want of culture, save a hardy plant, here and there, that would live in spite of neglect; and the boundary fence, tumbled down, had been

broken up for firewood. A picture of Jane's garden may, in short, be found in the twenty-fourth chapter of Proverbs, verse the thirtieth.

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding ;

"And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

"Then I saw, and considered it well : I looked upon it, and received instruction.

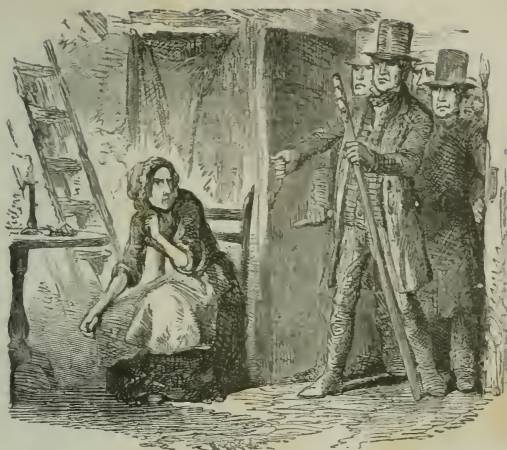
"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep :

"So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth ; and thy want as an armed man."

Jane grumbled sorely at her landlord's stinginess in thus allowing his property to go to rack and ruin ; the fact was, the landlord did not relish his shiftless, thriftless, lazy tenant, and instead of wishing to improve her habitation, would have been right glad if arrears in her rent allowed him to get rid of her : but Mary was answerable for that, and she took care never to fail in her part of the bargain ; although, till her husband got the place of parish clerk, she did so with inconvenience to herself. Some degree of personal sacrifice is in truth the head and front of real charity. Sir Philip Sidney, on the battle-field, passing the cup of cold water untasted from his own dying lips to give it to a wounded soldier, with the touching words, "Poor fellow ! thou hast even more

need of it than I have," is an instance of charity as real as any of the most munificent actions which bear that name.*

* Miss Nightingale and her little band of companions, male and female (for not to woman alone belongs the honour of quitting a happy home, and kindred, and every earthly comfort, to nurse and succour and minister religious consolation to the sick, and wounded, and dying soldiers of the late Crimean war, amid pestilence and privation and danger), is a proof that the spirit of their divine Master lives in them, and is a scarcely less affecting instance of human generosity than that recorded of Sir Philip Sidney at the battle of Zutphen.



CHAPTER III.

“For aye, with busy fingers we are sowing
Seed which no blight decays;
Surely to bear—though none may mark its
growing—
Fruit ‘after many days.’

“Let us take heed! for in our daily doing—
In word and thought—doth lie
That seed, which, oft unconscious, we are
strewing,
Of future destiny.’

THE shades of evening fell around Jane Simpson; to gloom succeeded thick darkness, and a whistling wind threatening to

tear off the tiles from her crazy tenement, at length brought back her thoughts to her still absent son. Shaking with cold, she groped her way down the ladder to the silent vault-like room below; roused up the slumbering embers of her fire, and recommenced her terrible watch. Of all the many miserable Sabbaths she had spent, this was the longest and dolefullest. Never had she seemed so forsaken—so destitute of all that makes life happy. The first thing that caught her eye, when a feeble flame, struggling through the black bars, threw a dim light over the nearest objects, was Mary's cake, left by her little niece Nanny in a shining blue plate on the dingy table. Mary had been taught to think the Sabbath was a blessed day, and when "the bells did chime 'twas angels' music," ushering in not only a pause from daily labour and earthly care, but a day of peaceful happiness—a holy-day but yet a holiday—a day of thanksgiving for mercies too often enjoyed without previous grateful acknowledgment—a day set apart by God himself, that His children might hear His word, and learn His will in His own special House of prayer, with humble joy and gladness—a day indeed to be desired as that in which the travellers from this world to the next might have time to rest and think of the better land to which they are

journeying. And finally, as the recompense in this life of a week passed in the upright discharge of their several duties to God, their neighbour and themselves. So thinking, the Sunday's dinner usually displayed some little additional comfort, although always cooked on the Saturday, that the requirements of human nature might as little as possible encroach on the duties of this sacred season; but the children chiefly looked forward to their tea, when a small cake, also made the day before, awaited each member of the happy household. It was a very inexpensive treat, boasting neither raisins nor currants, only a few carraway seeds and sugar; but it was "mother's making," and to their healthy unpampered appetites was perfectly delicious. One of the batch had often been set aside for cousin Richard—the reward of his orderly behaviour at church—till he seemed too old for such a present. There was another reason in the background. The *aunt* loved and pitied him; but the prudent cautious *mother* became unwilling, as he shot up to young manhood, to encourage any closer connexion with her family. The sharp-sightedness of maternal love had detected that his former liking for a pretty playfellow was growing into a more serious feeling, whilst her daughter's flushed cheek and stammering excuses for her luckless

cousin's many errors, on the score of his comfortless home and good *heart* (commonly confounded by the young for mere reckless *good temper*), gave proof that she was not quite indifferent to him. Thus for upwards of a year no cake had been specially sent to him, lest he might learn to look on himself as one of them. Now, from a sense of pity, fearing he would find little in his mother's pantry on his return, and in token of her own friendly feeling towards him notwithstanding their late coolness, she resumed the old custom. Mary's rule of government was conciliation — Jane's contradiction.

“ So a cake is come back again ; but will he ever come back to eat it ? ” was the sorrowful question that Jane's heart sent up to her lips, though there was none to answer it. She pushed away the cake petulantly, sat down by the fire, and, in spite of herself, burst into tears. They were the first she had shed, (for pride in the midst of her poverty and desolation still reigned in her unsanctified heart,) and she continued to weep and watch till her decaying fire reminded her of the lateness of the hour. Again and again she started to her feet, fancying she heard his quick step, or sudden shake at the door ; but no, it was only the gusty north wind rattling the creaking door, or flinging back the shattered window shut-

ter. She went to the door and looked up and down the long straggling street. Lights here and there still flashed cheerily through the small bright panes of the casement windows; and two or three "Good nights," with the sound of opening and closing doors, told of some neighbourly visit drawn to its friendly conclusion. Vainly she strained her aching eyes to each extremity. On the right, all lay shrouded in thick darkness; to the left, the moon slowly rising whitened the tops of the upright gravestones, and brought from their dim obscurity the boles of the tall straight trees that bordered the churchyard, standing like solemn sentinels keeping guard over the sleeping dead. She shrank back shudderingly, and once more resumed her place on the cold hearth-stone. The church clock struck eleven — twelve — one — two — three! Each stroke smote upon her ear like a passing bell! Now her heart grew sick indeed: that long, long day,—that weary, weary night, tamed the haughty spirit of the hapless mother.

Several times after their quarrels he had talked of working his passage to Australia, to learn tidings of his father; but she believed he only said so to frighten her. Was he gone? Hope died within her—she covered her face with her hands, and as the bitter cry, "Oh! shall I never see him more?"

burst from her pallid lips, the door opened so noiselessly that she was not aware of it before the current of air flickered the candle burning on the table, and Richard stole softly in. He turned back ere he spoke, and barred the door behind him. Two strides brought him to her side.

"Mother," he said, in a low voice that startled her by its hollow tone, "Mother!"

"Well, what have you got to say?" she answered, without looking up—half ashamed of her tears, and half inclined in her waywardness, now her fears were removed, to be angry that he had made her suffer so much. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing, but that if you didn't tell a falsehood last night, and have a few shillings or even pence, you must give them to me directly; and make me a bundle of what rags belong to me as fast as you can. There must be no more hard names or cross words between us this night, unless you want to see me dragged out of the house before your eyes. I tell you there is no time to spare for quarrelling; I must be off of my own accord, or I shall be taken away."

"O Richard!" exclaimed the terrified woman, jumping up—"what has happened?"

"Didn't I tell you there's no time for talking. You'll know soon enough. Will

you bestir yourself to help me to escape, or not?" He had gone to the window to pull down the scanty curtain. She followed him, and looked fearfully into his face. She hardly believed it was he: the rich rosy colour had fled from his cheek and lips—he was white as a sheet—his eyes blood-shot; the fresh round countenance of the careless lad of nineteen was suddenly ripened into that of stern, resolute, thoughtful manhood. She fancied she saw his father, such as he looked when they parted—she could not speak—her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

"Kindle the fire," he said, turning impatiently from her haggard gaze, "don't you see it is out? and get me my clean shirt, if luckily you've found time to wash it."

She obeyed mechanically. "Go up the ladder, and fork out what money you've hoarded there," he continued ere she had well finished; "I know you're worth something, though you refused me a meal's meat last night. May be you'll never be able to do so again!" She did as he bade her, and on her return with two shillings in small coin, and a few articles of clothing belonging to him, kept in her room, saw with dismay that he had thrown his shirt and stockings on the fire, and was rapidly changing his trousers for those he wore on Sundays.

"This all?" he asked rudely and distrustfully, as, cowed and trembling, she laid the money in silence on the table. "Not much certainly," he went on, eagerly counting out the four-penny, three-penny, and odd halfpence, "but enough to have bought me some supper yesterday night, which might have saved all this," and he sighed heavily.

"All what?" she ventured to inquire humbly, in a timid subdued tone, very unlike her usual one.

"Don't be in such a hurry! As I told you before, you'll know in due time," he replied, playfulness and savageness strangely blended in his voice and fierce expression of face. "And remember," he added, kicking the sack of straw that lay on trestles under the rough dresser in a corner of the lime-ashed floor, covered with a couple of dirty blankets and a ragged counterpane,—"*Remember*, I went to bed early last night, and was off betimes this morning to seek work. You don't exactly know where, but you think I said I was going to Hull, as it has been slack hereabouts. And there's employment for your fingers as well as your tongue—directly I'm gone bury these trousers in the yard. I'd burn them too for fear you should forget, but they'd make a cursed smell, and a confounded smoke, and may be you'll have visitors pretty soon with keen

noses, as well as sharp eyes, who'll call you to account for plenty of other things, without that. And do it to-night, this very night, for you ain't famous for getting up in a morning you know," was the last sneering command she received. He busied himself in squeezing into a small bundle his scanty clothing, and when the last knot was tied, snatching up the two shillings, strode to the door.

"Richard! Richard!" she at last faltered out, as, frightened and agonized, she saw him departing, "Richard, stop a minute, I say—do stop one minute, aunt Mary—"

"What of her?" he said quickly, turning round. "Here's one of her Sunday cakes she sent by little Nanny for your supper to-night." "The Lord bless her!" he muttered faintly, stepping towards her—then as hastily bounding back to the door. "No, I won't take it; if she knew all she wouldn't have sent it.—No, it would choke me downright, and I can scarce breathe or swallow as it is. So mother, farewell! it is to be hoped neither she nor you will see me for many a long day—perhaps never. Remember what I've told you about my sleeping here, and don't, for the love of heaven, forget to bury my trousers. Dig deep and cover the place over with rubbish to hide what you've done. Mother," he went on in a voice struggling

between tenderness and resentment, "Mother again farewell!"

The door softly closed as the last words were uttered in a whisper, and his miserable mother sunk on the floor. For some minutes she felt stunned, doubtful whether all that passed was not a shocking dream: she stretched out her arms to assist her to rise from the floor, and then the sad truth was realized by finding that she had fallen on her son's trousers, and that they were soaked in water! The sting of a viper would hardly have affected her more dreadfully. In a moment she was standing erect on her feet. Strange horrid thoughts were the first that flashed across her mind—the next—how to do as he had bidden her—bury them in the little yard behind the cottage. Blinding the candle with her hand, she went into the coal-place, and searched for the spade she used for getting up coals. It was not there, and now she recollected that he had himself taken it away a week ago, and never brought it back. Then she tried to scoop a hole with her fire-shovel; but with that she made so little way, that, fearing she might be caught in the very act, she wrung out the trousers as dry as she could, and placed them in her own bed between the sacking and flock mattress. Here she thought they would be more safely hidden than even in the yard;

no one would think of searching her bed for a pair of wet trousers. She had scarcely finished, before she heard a smart rap at the door, which she had taken the precaution to fasten, followed by a sudden attempt to enter. With trembling alarm, yet striving to seem calm, she opened it, and Mary, her face pale, and her lips quivering, bolted in.

“O Mary, dear Mary,” she cried, “tell me at once!” But for many minutes Mary, breathless with speed and terror, could not speak. She had crossed the churchyard, as the quickest and most private way to get to Jane, in her night-dress covered only by a loose shawl, with her bare feet thrust into a pair of slippers. And as she thus stood, her wan features hardly visible in the dusky light, her cold naked hand grasping the heavy key by which she let herself through the iron gates, there was something ghost-like in her appearance that increased Jane’s trouble and consternation.

“Is he here?” she at last muttered,—“Is he here?”

“No!”

“Thank God!” was her only reply, as she lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven.

“Don’t keep me waiting!” said Jane half angrily, half imploringly; “I’m almost dead with fright already! I can bear to hear anything after the day and night I’ve passed.

What is it—what has he done? What *has* he done?"

"I hardly know; but I came to warn him, if he had come home, to fly, before the police, who are now searching for him and the rest, should seek him here. O Jane, you must pray for help to bear this trial! There has been a fight in the preserves, early in the night or morning, about two o'clock, between Mr. Edgermond, some of his friends and keepers, and a party of poachers, and—and——"

"One of the gamekeepers is sadly hurt?" interrupted Jane, respiring more freely.

"O yes—one or two sadly hurt—but that's not all—the Squire himself—" her voice failed her.

"Is grievously wounded?" said Jane, shuddering with alarm as she spoke.

"O worse, worse," gasped Mary—"drowned!"

"Drowned!" repeated Jane—turning sick and cold—"drowned! did you say? Dead do you mean?—You don't mean dead?"

"Yes! with a horrible gash on his forehead; and they've got a huge stick that was left behind in the scuffle, and one of the gentlemen swears he saw poor Mr. Edgermond pull the man who struck him with it into the pond as he was falling. Only Mr. Edgermond's body was found when they dragged the pond, so as the man must have

scrambled out, they're hunting everywhere for the one that is believed to have given the fatal blow."

Jane neither spoke nor moved. "I mustn't stop a moment longer, it will soon be broad daylight, and I am come without James's knowledge. If I have done anything wrong I hope I shall be forgiven. I could not bear to think of his being taken in his bed, poor lad! for I fear me much he's the one they're going to try to fix on as the man that gave the dreadful stroke—and I'll not believe it till he says so himself—he couldn't have done such a deed! he wasn't a cruel boy—only mischievous and heedless. Poor fellow! poor fellow!" she continued in words interrupted by sobs—"we should not have known all this sad business so early if James had not got up, hearing a trampling of feet and loud talking in the street, and then seeing through the window several police with their shaded lanterns, he flung on his clothes and went out to ask what was the matter, or if he could be of any service. From them he learnt that Richard was suspected, and came back again sorrowfully to the house to tell me, and I slipped out directly to warn him away if he should be at home. My poor sister!" she added, as she opened the door to go out, "I grieve to leave you, but I must not be seen—it would do Richard

no good, and might injure my James—perhaps get him into trouble as conniving at Richard's escape. May God support and comfort you!”

There was a long blank in Jane's memory. She did not faint, nor weep, nor think; she sat quite still, till the tread of many hurrying feet roused her from her mental lethargy. The door opened, and the constable of the parish, with several policemen from the adjacent town, followed by a crowd of idlers at their heels, entered.

“I am sorry to come here on such an errand,” began the chief of the party, “but Mr. Edgermond has been cruelly murdered by a gang of poachers, who have long infested his preserves, whilst he and his game-keepers were watching for them last night, or rather very early this morning. Three of them are taken, and now in the hands of justice, but beyond the fact of being there, we have nothing to fix on them as yet. We want to find out who struck the gentleman, and tumbled with him into the water afterwards, and by your leave must search your house, as your son was with them all yesterday, drinking at the Chequers.”

“He might have been with them, as you say, yesterday,” said Jane, struggling to appear composed; “but he came home last night at nine o'clock, and went away early

this blessed morning to seek work, which has been lately very slack. I think he said he was going to Hull."

"I am glad to hear it," said the constable, drily; "very thankful for the credit o' this place, that the one who did such a foul shocking deed, don't belong to Bloomhill. Howsomever, we must do our duty. We were ordered to make strict search, and must look the premises well over."

In silent agony Jane watched their proceedings. First the coal-hole, next every nook and cranny in the room was carefully examined; then they all climbed the tottering ladder, Jane creeping up behind them, more dead than alive, and afterwards her own room underwent the same scrutiny. The bed which she had not gone into for two nights, but merely slept upon, looked so flat and pressed down, that beyond just turning back the rug, and feeling it over with their hands, they bestowed upon it no further notice; and Jane beheld them descend the ladder with a secret joy she could hardly refrain from showing. Lastly, they flung open the door leading into the little wilderness of a garden, but merely threw on it a slight passing glance; nothing was to be seen there except litter of all sorts.

"It is over," she thought, "and all is safe." Her courage returned. "You see he's

not here," she said, confidently, when they all stood together again in the kitchen, casting a scowling look as she spoke at the mob of rude spectators, whose curiosity had led them not only to block up the narrow doorway, but venture some steps beyond it. "It is as I told you. I said you wouldn't find him!"

"That's clear enough," replied the chief policeman; "he's not here, for certain. But what's this?" he asked, taking up the head of the broken brush, which lay close to the back-door, just where she had hurled it the morning after their quarrel, when she began to make ready the breakfast, "what's this?"

"Oh, you see what it is," said Jane, "an old worn-out brush, that's all."

"Where's the handle?"

"I am sure I don't know," she said, falteringly, with a sudden thrill of terror as she remembered that on the night of Saturday, he had used the handle as a defence from her attacks during their furious quarrel. "Burnt most likely for firewood by Richard, he was not very particular. You see how old it is!" she said, forcing a smile. She stooped down as she spoke, and taking it up threw it through the back-door, which had been left open, on the dust heap.

The policeman stepped into the garden, took it from the ground, and called to the others. There was a whispering.

"The soil has been fresh turned over," he said, gravely, "I did not remark that before. I must dig here."

"Do," she said, boldly, "if you will, but you must fetch your own spade. I've nothing but this shovel, that is so old, I could not get it far enough into the ground to sow some onion-seed a day or two ago."

Without attending to this speech, the policeman called out to the throng at the door, who still remained, in defiance of Jane's frowns,

"Will nobody fetch a spade?"

A dozen flew off to render this service, and several were soon brought.

"Come into my house if you dare!" cried Jane, starting fiercely forward, exasperated at the willingness of her neighbours to aid in her son's detection.

They drew back half alarmed at her menacing attitude; and selecting one himself from the number held out to him, the policeman proceeded to dig where she had tried to hide the trousers, Jane looking scornfully on the while. He soon came to the end of her light labour: then they whispered again, and, to her horror, once more went up the ladder. She had not strength to follow them this time. Her pale face turned paler still as she fixed her glaring eyes on the ladder-staircase; the creaking of the wretched bed-

stead was distinctly heard in the death-like silence that prevailed, and in two minutes more they returned with the wet soiled trousers in their possession. She sunk half fainting on a chair.

"Mrs. Simpson," said the officer, "we have had a hard duty to perform before a mother, but were forced to go through it. The young Squire has been murdered by a blow from a heavy stick, for there wasn't depth enough of water to drown him; and there are witnesses who will swear the man who struck it was struggling with him in the pond after the poor gentleman was knocked down. Now, when I saw that brush-head, and then the ground scratched up, my mind misgave me that we hadn't searched enough for proofs, so I begun again, and here we have 'em."

"You're a hard-hearted, cruel man!" she uttered, with a piercing cry, as her stricken conscience whispered that she had both caused the crime, and betrayed its commission. "He may have been amongst them, but I'm sure he never struck the blow. There was no doubt a splashing in the water when the two fell in, that wetted those nearest. He might have stepped to the side to help to save the Squire—how do you know? And those that did it lay the blame on him to screen themselves. I hid the trousers in my bed my own self;

'twas my doing when he came in, and told me there had been a row, and how sorry he was he ever kept company with such a set, and never would have any dealings with them again. And now he's on his road to Hull to get work and live a steadier life. O don't bring these things forward to make against him!" she cried, flinging herself in wild despair at their feet. "A poor, fatherless boy, only nineteen,—not kept so strict as he should have been, I know. This will be a lesson to him, I'm sure it will. O don't, don't, don't betray him; only let him off this time, and he'll reform, and be a good man all the days of his life!"

To this passionate, but senseless appeal, the police returned no other reply than shakes of the head, and Jane, with glazed eyes and a burning brain, beheld them depart, carrying away the tokens of her son's frightful crime. The murmur of voices, the echo of retreating footsteps died away, yet still she lay crouching on the floor. All in vain were the ready lies invented by her unscrupulous tongue. His participation in the terrible conflict had been divulged by her own indolence and want of forethought, which prevented her from either hiding or burning the brush-head, though warned by Mary that a huge stick was the weapon which inflicted the deadly wound on Mr. Edger-

mond. And well she remembered that Richard had left the cottage with the thick brush-handle in his possession. Like the good Samaritan, Mary was soon with her, to offer what consolation she could, but it was little in such a case that she was able to give. Strict search was making everywhere, and a reward of one hundred guineas from the family of the murdered gentleman, in addition to the same sum arising from the County Association, to any but the one who actually struck the fatal blow, made his capture of no little importance to his pursuers, and his betrayal no small temptation to his associates in guilt. The head of the brush found in Jane's cottage fitted to the handle taken up from the pond where Mr. Edgermond met his untimely death; the coarse fustian trousers discovered in his mother's bed, still full of moisture, and the hems heavy with that kind of earth peculiar to fish-ponds or standing water, seemed to mark him out as the criminal. Not a doubt was entertained as to his guilt, and there were few who did not trace it to his mother's sad bringing up.

Meanwhile the unhappy woman remained a voluntary prisoner in her own dwelling. She was accused of no complicity or connivance at his crime, excepting so far as a natural endeavour to shield him from justice after the deed was done. The bad terms on

which they lived were so well known as to ward off all suspicion from herself, but none pitied her—none even gave her credit for the misery she endured. His petted infancy—his unguided boyhood—his comfortless home—his father's somewhat similar but lighter crime, and his obstinate desertion of both wife and child after his sentence left him at liberty to return to them and his kindred—the very crime itself, were all coupled together and brought home to her door; for the landlord of the Chequers gave in evidence at the inquest, that after leaving the tap-room at ten o'clock on the Saturday night, he returned in an hour with that identical broomstick, declaring his mother had turned him out of the house, and that it had done good service in defending him from her outrageous violence. Day after day she heard no human voice but Mary's when she brought her food, and occupied herself in performing such common offices as daily life demands to preserve it. All who have experienced real sorrow are aware how it deadens the mind, and how needful it is to struggle against its enfeebling power, that we may not, in the selfishness it brings on, omit the duties of life. Poor Jane, never accustomed to self-control, sunk under this great calamity. There she sat in the crazy old rocking-chair, where he, now a fugitive from

offended justice, charged with the most atrocious crime man can commit against his fellow-man, had so often been lulled to that peaceful slumber he was never more to enjoy—her elbows on her knees—her bowed-down face covered by her two hands, whilst Mary lighted the fire, fetched a can of water from the village pump, put on the kettle, and silently got ready her scarcely touched meals, leaving her own little household to the care of her eldest daughter.



CHAPTER IV.

“ We soon must part, and I must go
Over the wide, wide sea ;
Forgive the past. I dare not ask
That you'll remember me ;
A base, degraded, ruin'd man,
Forget me—if you can.”

A FEW weeks had thus gone dismally by, and Mary (who as well as his mother clung to the hope that Richard had not committed wilful murder, and would therefore make good his escape) was just quitting her in the evening,

when there was a very loud knock at the door, and a moment afterwards, without waiting for leave, or taking off his large slouch hat, a stout middle-aged man with sun burnt face and hands, clad in a coarse seaman's jacket, holding a long odd-shaped letter, entered, walked straight up to Jane, and said gruffly, "Jane Simpson, I suppose?"

Mary's heart leaped at the sound of that voice. Surely it was familiar to her ear? Jane drew back—her lips quivered.

"Yes," she replied, looking up at him with a wild, terrified stare,—“Who are you? Come to reproach me as usual? I thought you said you would never come back.”

“Don't be frightened, Mistress,” he answered, somewhat sarcastically, “I ain't he. He was as good as his word. He said he'd never darken your door agen, and depend *he* will never come back to trouble you—he's dead! I'm his eldest brother, that you never see afore, cause I went to sea a stripling, and when I got home again, poor Richard was gone, and I had no call (by all accounts) to begin any acquaintance with you: besides, I've a large young family of my own to keep, and live a good bit off; and I shouldn't have come now, I promise you, but to tell you this news; and, what you'll like to hear still better is, that your husband left the lad

over seventy pounds, and it's lodged in a bank somewhere in London, where he can go and draw it, if so be he gets out of this terrible mess; but he's to draw it his-self if alive (so the will says), or if dead, why I'm to take it, and part it amongst uz his relations—five brothers and sisters—myself, my two brothers, John and Samuel, and my two sisters—Anne and Martha (all of uz married) with many childer, so in coorse very acceptable.”

Jane was unable to speak. Mary, more composed, begged to see the letter: he gave it readily into her hands.

“All right, fair and above board,” said he, as he watched her distrustful face whilst reading.

The contents were such as he stated; and, further, that a copy of the will itself, properly attested, might be seen at the house of a mercantile firm to whom it had been transmitted, with a draft for the money, by Richard Simpson's last employer, a cabinet-maker in Sydney. There was no mention of his wife. A sort of postscript added that Richard Simpson died after a long illness, and that the last few years of his life were decently, if not religiously, spent. Gold-diggings, with their tide of wealth, and want, and woe, were then happily undiscovered—the whole was steadily earned. He had re-

sumed his former trade, and but for a tedious and painful malady, would have left more behind him.

"I got this letter yesterday," continued their uncouth visitor, "and, as I saw what had befallen the lad in the news a fortnight ago, I came off as fast as I could to ask you if I hadn't best go to London, and make sure of the money afore he's took up, for you see, he can't get it hisself, any how, now this has happened, and if he's catched and hanged, as I s'pose he will, why it'll fall to the government, you're ware, and be lost to uz all."

"O God!" cried Jane, tossing up her arms as she sprang from her chair, and then dropped down into it again—the awful name wrung from her livid lips by intense horror.

"You rude, unfeeling man," said Mary, indignantly; "have you no bowels of compassion for his poor, miserable mother? Provoke not the sorrowful soul in its distress; add not more trouble to a heart that is vexed. Do you not see her burden is already almost more than she can bear? Would you wish to break the bruised reed outright?"

"Beg pardon, mistress," said he, drawing back with a slight obeisance to Mary, whose frequent perusal of the Bible had imbued her language with something of its eloquence and majesty, and awed by this fervent appeal to his better feelings; "beg pardon! I'm a

plain-spoken man, and meant no offence. Lord bless my soul, how she does take on, to be sure! I declare I'd no notion, from what folks told me, she'd ha' laid it so to heart. I heerd when I kum from sea my last trip—"

"'Tis no matter what you heard," interrupted Mary, "you find you were misinformed—"

"May be!" was the dubious assent; "but as I said afore, what's to be done now? Is the brass worth having or not?—that's the question. There's no time to be lost, for certain. What's to be done? I say."

Mary looked at her sister, but Jane only groaned; she was unable to give any opinion. Death is an awful messenger to the living members of a family, as well as to the soul summoned to depart to another world. The grave, like charity, covers over a multitude of sins, and Jane, sad and stormy as had been their short union, did not learn that she was a widow without some pangs. Whatever her faults as a wife, she had never been unfaithful to him, even in thought. She was idle and peevish, but not immoral. She felt also keenly the omission of her name in his last testament. During his long illness he had never pardoned her, though he remembered his boy—that boy whose face he never saw! And his brothers and sisters still kept,

it appeared, their place in his heart : he was not, therefore, without one. Had she gone the right way to gain it? By that wonderful faculty of the human mind which in a moment brings to the memory, with the quickness and vividness of the lightning's flash, the past events even of a whole life, she looked back on her own and her departed husband's career with mingled shame and regret. His, now first revealed to her, showed that in the midst of temptations of all kinds, he had incurred no fresh moral guilt, and conquered his natural propensity to idleness. Neither was he selfish, nor unmindful, in some degree, of his duty as a father. Seven years, out of the nineteen which rolled between them, he was a slave—in twelve, therefore, he had not only maintained himself respectably, but accumulated the sum which reached his son at so sorrowful a period, to be expended, perhaps, in vain attempts to save him from an ignominious death. What had she done the while? She dared not dwell on the contrast. The husband she had once so much despised rose to her memory in the bright colours of their early affection, redeemed, in her sight, from every former fault by his subsequent conduct. She felt that "widow" was written in her book of life. The iron had, at last, entered into her soul; and she sat bending her-

self backward and forward in her chair, in moaning, speechless anguish.

It is a strange truth, that those who never take the trouble of thinking upon what may happen from their want of foresight, are ever the most overwhelmed by the consequences of their folly. It might be supposed that the divine precept, "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof," so misapplied by them as a plea for the neglect of all the common rules of prudent precaution, would afford some support when the evil hour comes. But it is not so. The feeble mind that lets all things take their chance, seldom rises above the shock. Jane was crushed—incapable of uttering a word, and Mary, after fruitless efforts to obtain her attention, at length proposed to the uncivil bearer of all this good and evil news, that he should wait till she fetched her husband to advise with him. He consented, and the clerk soon came. Much consultation ensued; but it was finally settled that he and William Simpson should proceed together to London, and receive the money in Richard's name, giving a security for it in their own. In the eye of the law he was innocent till found guilty. If he escaped, the money might be remitted to him hereafter; if taken and tried, it would procure counsel to defend him. With the kindness that ever marked Mary's and her husband's conduct,

William Simpson was invited to their house. He turned out to be a blunt but well-meaning man, whose bad opinion of Jane had led him into needless roughness. Real grief is seldom misunderstood. He was touched by her distress, and beginning to think they had, as a family, wrongly abandoned their brother's child to her sole bringing up, and thus might be somewhat answerable for his misconduct, he declared his entire willingness to share with Mary's husband the responsibility of claiming the money.

There was no time to be lost,—the same night the two uncles went to London by the railroad—obtained eighty pounds, and returned to Bloomhill a few days afterwards. In a world like this, great changes are often effected in far less time. During this short absence, the dreaded discovery of Richard's hiding-place was made, and they found the poor, unhappy young man already the inmate of a jail! Two of his associates, weary of imprisonment, greedy of gold, and, like such characters, ever faithless, turned Queen's evidence, and indicated the locality where it was probable that he might be concealed. He was taken from the very retreat, in the neighbourhood, which they had themselves pointed out to him as a secure asylum till he might escape to Liverpool, from whence he intended to go by the first vessel that

sailed for America, working his passage on board. He was forthwith conveyed to York, there to await his trial, and a long host of witnesses summoned to give testimony against him. It is not needful to go into all the heart-rending details of what ensued. Mary and her husband visited him in prison several times during his confinement. At first he received them coldly—forcing himself to appear manly, and unmoved by his situation; but a flood of kindly remembrances at the sight of his aunt's grief softened the proud heart; and, her hand clasped in his, he gave her voluntarily a full and true account of all that had passed. During his concealment for upwards of three weeks, under a staircase, in darkness all day—stealing out for a little refreshment at night, he had had time for reflection on the past, and the better feelings of his nature, long dormant, revived. He was greatly affected by his father's legacy—that father whose fate he had so often longed to hear of—and entrusted the whole to their management.

“It has come,” he said, despondingly, “too late for me, excepting, indeed, that it may help to save my life. A clever lawyer might bring the jury to acquit me of all malice, and, so far, do me nothing but justice. But if I am spared I shall never be happy again. I killed him—yes, I did;

I took the life out of him: I know it, and to you I'll confess it; but it was not done in malice; I owed him no grudge—did not know 'twas he! Saturday night, mother's taunts had well nigh maddened me. I went back to them who have now given me up, just to spite and frighten her, as I thought, for a day or two. We had little to eat, and much to drink; and on my empty stomach the ale and spirits took hold. About half-past twelve o'clock at night, when Sunday was fairly turned, they proposed going into the preserves, hare hunting; and I thought that only mere sport,—a sort of a lark. They made me believe we poor people had as good a right to what went about wild in the woods as the gentry. We beat about the bushes a good while, but couldn't start any game; so then they suddenly pulled out nets from under their coats, and said they'd go to the fish-ponds. I didn't quite relish that, for I knew there had been some rows about the fish not long before, but I was in for it. The Squire was there with his friends and keepers, watching: they had been so often drawn (and, I suppose, somebody having told where we'd spent the whole of Sunday, he guessed how it would end on Monday morning, and so got there afore us), and we all went at it directly. Whilst we were thus scuffling, I felt two

or three hard knocks, I don't know who gave them, but one in my face set my heated blood up. I had, most unfortunately, mother's brush-handle in my hands, that I had wrested from her when she wanted to thrash me with it on the Saturday night. I had taken it only to beat about the bushes for the hares, and rabbits, and birds: the devil tempted me to use it on somebody, and I hit at the one nearest to me, who I fancied had given me the blows; he had strength enough left to collar me, and we fell together into the pond; he let go his hold when we got to the bottom, and I scrambled out, for it was not deep, and I thought he would do the same; but it seems I dealt him a blow without intention (for I'm desperate strong) that did for him. We soon heard a cry from the keepers that the master was killed, and we all took to our heels; they ran after us with curses and hallo's, but it was nearly pitch dark, and we got off. They persuaded me to go where I was apprehended, as a safe spot, till I could get out of the country; so I just went back to mother's, which was partly in my way, you know, to see if she had a trifle of money to help me on my road, and change my wet things. You know all the rest: and now, I declare to you, I don't much care which way it ends. It will never be with

me as it was before. I can never be happy again, and I never have been happy—down-right happy—in my whole life. Always quarrelling with mother, getting into scrapes when I was a boy, ashamed of my shabby clothes, and hating my comfortless home as I grew up,—willing to be anywhere rather than there. I've always been a black sheep, somehow, and still mortal angry with anybody that said so, and pining to be different from what I was. When my uncles, Thomas and Harry, went to New Zealand with their young master, I'd have given my life almost to go too, but the master said he durst not trust me. He couldn't say there was much harm in me,—but I was a wildish chap; and as it was a great expense to take out servants, he didn't care to run any hazards; so I lost that chance.

“Aunt Fanny's husband (though you and uncle kindly offered to pay my passage) wouldn't let me join them, because he was sent out with a free passage, on account of his character and aunt's, and he said a scamp like me might damage them. He said it smiling, but I felt it all the same. Then mother put in her word, and the upshot was I couldn't get off. Perhaps they were right, for they're all prospering without me. Mother used to call me, when I offended

her, a little devil, and say I should be like my father;—I'm a precious deal worse. He fought in broad daylight with a constable that wished to take him up at a public meeting, for making an idle speech. I aimed a felling blow with a heavy stick at a gentleman, when I was trespassing on his own premises at midnight, and killed him. And all for the sake of two shillings' worth of trout!"—and the miserable boy covered his face with his hands, to hide the burning tears that deluged his pale cheeks. "What my sentence may be in court, nobody, I suppose, can well guess, seeing how uncertain all such trials are;—not less than transportation for life, I suppose: but I have had my sentence read to me already in this dreadful dungeon. O aunt! I never even guessed what it was to be in a prison,—shut out from seeing the bright blue sky, and the cheerful green grass, and the waving trees with the pretty birds on the feathery branches, singing their hearts out,—and the sweet smells of the beautiful flowers, and the cattle looking so happy and quiet, grazing in the meadows, and the bees buzzing, and the water sparkling in the river and brooks,—to be chained within four dark dismal walls, hardly able to breathe for want of fresh air, no light but what comes glimmering through thick iron bars,—like a

wild beast's den in a show at a fair,—and no sounds to break the doleful stillness but the stern jailor's key grating in the horrid lock. And then to lie and think of that money! O! Auntie, Auntie, if all this had never happened, I might have gone to Australia and taken land, settled down there, and then, perhaps, you and uncle wouldn't have objected to me and cousin Maria making a match of it! I know she'd have made quite a different man of me,—her sweet words and tidy industrious ways would have been everything to bring me to turn over a new leaf. I declare I often did what mother told me not to do, because her peevish voice and sharp bitter words provoked and set me against her; and I was sick of our nasty little pig-stye of a place. To think of what I am, and what I might have been! Even if I escape a violent death, I don't expect to get off under transportation for all my days. A slave to my life's end,—work, work, work. under hard task-masters, herding with the scum of the earth,—villanous rascals all of them, and they thinking me the same, or worse,—till I die. And me nineteen—only nineteen!”

Again he wept bitterly, and Mary joined her tears to his during this recital of the affray, the truthfulness of which there was no reason to dispute, and the affecting al-

lusions to his own personal disappointments. But she did not, from false sympathy at the moment, proffer insincere words of peace, for which she knew there was no foundation. It was only too true,—the world could never be to him the same as before. Toilsome days—days of strife and mortification—discomfort within, and annoyances without his home, he had known, but nights of peaceful slumber succeeded, when stretched on his pallet-bed (hard though it might be) he forgot all his troubles in sleep undisturbed by remorse. Never more would he arise—in hope of a brighter future, refreshed in spirit and frame—from such rest! Never more the gladness of heart and lightness of spirit he had once felt would gild his morning waking.

Whatever his aunt and uncle could do to save him, they did—but it was soon apparent, when the trial came on, that he would be made the scapegoat of the party. The chain of evidence against him was clear and circumstantial. The murderous brush-handle was produced in court, and fitted to the brush-head found in his mother's house. He was the only one who went thus armed: the rest carried nothing but fishing-nets and gins for snaring game. Some foolish boyish boasts, made in moments of hilarity, at the Chequers, that he would resist to the death rather than be taken and transported as his

father was, officiously brought forward by his former fast friend the landlord, and confirmed with exaggerations by the very men whose evil counsels and vile example had ruined him, were construed not unnaturally into previous intention. The tide of public opinion ran strongly against him. There was a deep impression in his disfavour. His character had deteriorated of late. The undercurrent of domestic discord had ruffled the natural sweetness of his disposition. Conscious of being looked on distrustfully, he had become surly to his neighbours, and met their distance by scowls of defiance, not efforts at amendment. His untoward boyhood, and wild lawless manhood—his father's violence of temper and conviction for a brutal assault, with his mother's want of personal respectability, told secretly on the mind, if not openly on the ear, against him. His reprobate associates, to shield themselves, laid all the blame on his shoulders. There was none to bear testimony to his former good conduct. Positive evidence and private opinion were alike leagued in fearful array to criminate him. The jury found him guilty, and he was adjudged to be hanged.

He heard the dreadful sentence with manly courage, yet devoid of the least tincture of effrontery or audacity, and when the awful question was asked him, "if he had anything

to say why death should not be pronounced," replied solemnly, "Nothing, excepting that the deed was not done in malice. I don't wish to lay any blame on those that are innocent. I did it, but without suspecting who I struck, and would thankfully lay down my own life to bring the poor gentleman back again. I only wish to remark besides, that I hope my punishment will be a warning to other young men not to idle away the Sunday, and not to keep evil company."

This was the sole censure he passed on those who had so cruelly corrupted his unprotected youth, and finally given him up not only to screen themselves, but obtain the price set upon his capture.

The sentence was recorded accordingly, but commuted, in consideration of his youth and a strong recommendation to mercy from the jury, into transportation for the term of his natural life.

A month afterwards he was on his way to Norfolk Island. He refused to see his mother, but without bitterness. It could not be of any use, and he thought both would suffer greatly from it. She did not press her offered visit. She remembered but too well her parting with his father, to be desirous of going through another which must have been still more terrible. The few pounds remaining from his father's

bequest he begged might be sent to his father's family. "It was earned by the sweat of his brow, and had I been dead they were to inherit it," was all he said. Jane's conscience told her she could have no claim on such money, and she assented without complaint. Yet it inflicted another pang. Both husband and son thus registered that she had failed in her duty to them.



CHAPTER V.

“ O take the blessed Book of Truth,
And kneeling on thy bended knee,
Now raise thy firm-clasped hands to pray,
O God! be merciful to me !
O raise a contrite heart to heaven,
That all thy sins may be forgiven.”

WHEN Richard Simpson was gone, and the horrible excitement over, the tide of feeling, seemingly chilled by the fear that he would meet a violent death, flowed once more in his mother's veins ; but when she looked

again from the blindness of her sorrow, all the brightness of her life was fled. She had nothing more to do with the world around her—hopes and fears were at an end—the grave and the sea parted her for ever from husband and son. Her passions, ever violent, increased by unrestrained indulgence, and found relief only in long continuous weeping and wailing. The murmuring spirit was all that remained of her former self—for hours together she would wander up and down her dreary abode, wringing her hands, bemoaning her fate and her son's fate, and trying to cheat herself into the belief that he had been cruelly treated, his sentence a most severe, if not unjust one.

“To condemn my poor boy at nineteen, for his whole life, to such dreadful slavery for a chance blow in a fray! And gentlemen—rich gentlemen, rolling in riches, thus to persecute poor men often starving for taking a few hares, or rabbits, or birds, or fish—creatures living wild in the green fields and rivers, with the blue sky over their heads—miles away from their fine houses! Oh, they may brave it out now—but they will be punished for it some time if there's a Judge over us all—that they will.”

“Jane, dear Jane,” Mary would say—“it is not for the value of these creatures, I do believe, but you know it must be dis-

agreeable to them to have lawless men coming by night into their grounds. Though the birds, and hares, and rabbits, and fishes, and such like, are living wild, as you say, in the woods, and fields, and waters, yet they are fed by what they find there; and if these woods, and fields, and waters belong to the lord of the manor, as he is called, surely they also belong to him? Perhaps a few of these great lords and gentlemen may render their poor neighbours more discontented with their lot in life by being sometimes a little too strict in its preservation; but still, Jane, one should not forget that it is always idle, and mostly bad men who take to poaching as a trade, just to avoid honest working. You know yourself it is not such who make good husbands, and sons, and quiet neighbours, and besides, it is my firm belief, that if there were no laws to the contrary, it would be still worse for people in our condition. If every idle man and boy was allowed to pick up a living in the woods and fields, you may be certain few would submit to the drudgery of regular labour. They would choose a dog's life, hunger and ease, till they came to ruin, and their families might beg, or starve, or steal for a maintenance as they could. I see in my own boys (good boys as they are), sometimes on the Monday morning a natural unwillingness to go back to the close,

and often unhealthy workshop—the stunning noise of the hammer, and forge, and shuttle, and the wearisome confinement, but I never seem to notice it—only I say, ‘Work must be attended to. None are sent into this world to do nothing! All must labour in some way, if they intend to be happy or respectable—the rich with their heads—the poor with their hands. Those must buckle to, that mean to thrive’—and then they smile, and put on their hats and march off. Now, if they had the run of the game, I can’t answer for it that they would not prefer such a mode of getting an uncertain living in youth—ending in certain want and rags when *grown old*—for poaching is a profitless venture, seeing game is so scarce and watchers so plenty. Then gamekeepers are a great expense, and if there were no poachers, there would be no need of them to protect the game from being stolen. You are greatly to be pitied. I grieve for Richard too, almost as much as you; but we must not forget the poor young lady, not long before a bride, with her baby born after the father’s death—a little girl; and so all the grand house and estates gone to her husband’s uncle; and she, that was so rich and happy, now almost in poverty for her, and a widow! Gentlemen seldom come to such a sad death; but every year one hears of game-

keepers half-murdered, if not killed outright; whilst they are, after all, only doing their duty in defending their master's property. They also have wives and families to lament them. For my part, I declare to you that I see no difference between robbing an orchard, or a potato-field, and robbing a preserve: we take what does not belong to us. Besides, you know it is not lawful; and that should make men forbear from such practices. There are many laws, and many other things in this world, one should like to change a little, as we think, for the better; but whilst they continue laws, we must respect them, or lay our account to be punished for breaking them. It is but 'kicking against the pricks' to do otherwise. It is just the same with smuggling, which is cheating the revenue—that is, my James says, the good Queen's government. She must raise money somewhere, or how could she pay all she has to pay? And in what better way than putting a tax upon things coming from foreign countries—things persons might do without, if they would? It is quite frightful to think the crimes that that brings on—the fights between them and the navy officers employed to watch and seize them—the lying, and swearing, and anger, on both sides. Then, spirits and tobacco coming cheaper to themselves and people in our walk of life, is another

sore evil—a deadly gain. Think of the drunkenness and other sins it leads to—wives and husbands murdered by each other and their children starved almost to death. I once read a story of a good man tempted of the devil to commit one of three things,—two very, very horrible—the third was to get drunk; so he chose that, as the least; and then, when reason was gone out of him, he committed the other two also. Our poor Richard said to me in prison, that ‘if the drink had not taken hold of him, he would never have done as he did.’ Oh! depend upon it, poaching and smuggling are serious offences in the eyes of a just God! If the tenth commandment against coveting was more heeded, all the shocking tales one is told of would never have happened. He knew well what was in man’s nature, when He wrote with his own Divine finger on Moses’ tablets, not only, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ but ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s goods;’ and, by the mouth of his prophet Habakkuk, ‘Wo to him that increaseth that which is not his.’ ”

Jane rarely made any answer to these affectionate endeavours to bring her to a better frame of mind. Crushed by grief and distress, she had lost her contradictory manner of speech; but no arguments could rouse her to wholesome exertion against the

evils that oppressed her. "The whole head was sick, the whole heart faint." Still, Mary went on in her quiet, benevolent course. We can all be forbearing and forgiving at times and at intervals; but continual perseverance in the attempt to comfort those who *will* not be comforted—to raise to heaven the spirit that *will* not be lifted from earth—to find all we do to please or console in vain, either rejected or neglected—to help those who *will* not help themselves—is a trial known only to those who have endured it, and requires Christian fortitude to be borne without murmuring, or ourselves giving way under the burden.

"Dear Jane," she said, one day, when the fretful voice, as she muttered her woeful complainings, gloomy face and listless despairing attitude, were more than commonly distressing to her sister,—“Dear Jane, do try to make sunshine for yourself: *you* even may do so in this world, and with your (I admit) darkened prospects. I wish you could be prevailed upon to read the Bible. I am sure it would be of great service to you every way. You know the old saying is, ‘What can’t be cured, must be endured.’ That piece of wisdom the world teaches us. You would find in the Bible a different kind of consolation, and learn that he who sows in tears shall reap in joy, if he only tries to

bear his burden with patient submission to the will of God."

"I cannot! To tell the truth, I have several times, when you were gone, taken the Book down, and forced myself to read a bit here and there, and got no comfort for my pains anywhere. Only one night the last week, after something you said, I opened it, and read about Hannah giving up her child to God, till I thought I should have gone mad—giving up mine, as I have done, to the devil. Then I find Proverbs, and all that, just like so many stones thrown right at me. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not depart from it,' is, besides, not true; for mother trained me the very same as you, yet I haven't quite gone the same road, or come to the same end." And, glancing at her wretched room and shabby mourning, the hapless woman laughed hysterically.

"Leave all these portions of the Old Testament till you are stronger in body and mind," said Mary, "and begin at the New. Don't dip into it as a task, a few words in one place and a few in another, but from first to last. There is nothing to hinder you now.

"Oh, very true!" she cried, with her customary quickness in finding food for her misery out of everything, while big tears streamed from her swollen eyelids down her

sallow cheeks like rain—"Very true; nothing at all to hinder me now! No Dick to scold—no whistling, no singing, or any plague about washing or mending his things! Oh, Mary, when I read how she made hers a little coat every year, and brought it to the Temple, though she had many others to do for, and remembered how my *one* poor boy used to run about almost stark naked, and as fine a little fellow as ever was seen, it was all I could do to keep my hands from doing for myself what he was sentenced to undergo, and so end all my troubles at once! I have deserved hanging far more than he did."

"Blessed be God!" said Mary, solemnly, "that you were saved from committing the deepest of all sins; since that puts repentance out of our power. Then, where did you learn you would end your troubles by rushing, with all your sins on your head, unrepented of, into God's presence? The sixth commandment, 'Thou shalt not commit murder,' means murder of one's self as well as others. King Saul and Judas Iscariot are the only two miserable creatures I remember in the Bible said to have committed this dreadful crime. Nothing is told us of the punishment of Saul, very likely because he was mad long before, or he would not have acted as he did; but of Judas, the Apostles, in the first chapter of Acts, when recounting

his horrible crime, and frightful fall after he hung himself, finish by these words, 'that he might go to his own place.' And a dreadful one it must have been, since our blessed Saviour himself said, 'Good were it for that man if he had never been born.' So, hanging himself did not, you find, end his troubles. Oh, do—do begin again at the Gospel according to St. Matthew."

"No, I can't; besides, the very sight of the book gives me pain—afflicts me afresh. I used often to give it him when a baby (as one may say) to play with—anything to keep him quiet, and then he'd tear the leaves, and I slapped him for it, and he cried, and the tears wetted the paper, and there are all the marks left. No, I can't—I can't; O my boy—my poor boy!" She flung her apron over her face, and gave way to a paroxysm of tears and lamentations.

Mary waited patiently till this burst of grief subsided, and then said quietly, "Regrets for the past are unavailing. We cannot call it back, but we may try to redeem what we feel to have been wrong by our present conduct. I'll send you another Bible. Give that to me, I'll keep it for his sake. We have several, and can spare you one very well—a nearly new one, with good clear print, and many nice pictures. We took it in numbers, each subscribing something

towards it; so think of it as a love-token from all of us. O Jane," she said, throwing her arms round her neck, while her own tears fell fast, "I have good hope of you, indeed I have, from to-day. The dresser of the vineyard is still going about amongst us, secretly marking us for pruning, or rooting up and casting into the fire. Some are brought to God at one time, some at another, some early, some late. Only just begin St. Matthew to-day, and bear in your mind that it is all true—the real history of God, written by good men inspired (that is, taught) by Him to make His word, and works, and will known to His creatures after He was ascended again to heaven. Promise me this, Jane. If you think I have (as far as I could) been a friend to you, make me this promise, oblige me in this one thing, and, dear Jane, you will have made me more than a return for any little kindness I may have shown you."

Jane was moved—her stubborn temper yielded to Mary's tears and prayers. "I will," she at last said, "I will then. I know you are, and always were a good sister to me—to oblige you, Mary, I will; but, so far as I am concerned, it's of no use. I tell you the plain truth, I never took any pleasure in reading the Bible, or in going to church, for what I was to learn there, and I can't bring my mind to it now."

"Well, but you promise," said Mary eagerly.

"Yes, to please you," she answered listlessly.

"Thank you, dear Jane," and Mary tripped lightly away to prevent Jane from retracting. She longed to add, "Beg for light and grace before you begin," but she dared not; she knew too well the rebellious spirit would revolt from such advice, so she prayed herself for God's blessing on this attempt to bring her sister to Him.

Jane had, in truth, as she querulously said, plenty of time on her hands, and nothing to divert her attention from any subject on which she chose to bestow it. She was literally quite alone; no dog, no cat, no bird to bear her company. She had ever set her face against domestic pets, not that she hated dumb creatures, or would have treated them cruelly from mere wantonness or a bad heart, but she was not of a loving disposition like Mary, and her radical detestation of trouble or annoyance of any sort, made their cries for food, and the necessity of appeasing them, equally disagreeable to her; so after many a contest with her boy, who, in common with all other boys, wished for such home play-mates, he yielded; for her will, as well as her power in his childhood, was stronger than his own. She was thus left in his ab-

sence without even the solace of a gentle animal's affectionate face looking gratefully into hers. How keenly that absence was felt none knew but herself. Besides her own peculiar particular faults she had this, in common with many others of mankind, *present* blessings were never recognised as such *till withdrawn*. Her boy's society was daily becoming more essential to her when it was lost for ever. But, with the inherent waywardness of her nature, this had only tended to render her more peevish, and him more unhappy, when together. She selfishly forgot that whilst he became more companionable to her, she necessarily grew less so to him—that the young man stepping into life, full of its rainbow visions and promises, must have wants and wishes very different from those of a middle-aged woman, with hair prematurely white from the early blight of all hers—that he naturally sought the society of his equals in sex and age, and could not be satisfied with what had hardly sufficed to content the boy,—their tumble-down hovel, scanty food, and low estimate amongst their neighbours. She was angry at his murmurs and his frequent absences, and thus rendered his comfortless home each day more distasteful to him by her sullenness or reproaches.

At dinner-time came Mary's two youngest girls, bringing the promised Bible, neatly

backed in glazed calico, with a bit of the family dinner between two warm plates, wrapped in a clean cloth. "Mother hopes you'll like it," said the elder of the two, "and make a good dinner. So good-bye, Auntie dear."

Jane sat long with the plates before her. "What a good woman Mary is! She believes all she says about the Bible; and must have great regard for me, or she could not be so kind," came into her mind many times. There was comfort in that thought. Mary after all cared for her. Who is there that has not felt in deep depression of spirit, from whatever cause, cheered by the same? How many have been raised from depths of sin and sorrow by the knowledge that some one still clings to them in love? A ray of hope shone suddenly upon that desolate, desponding heart; she partook* of the food so nicely served with long unfelt appetite, was re-

* Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras, stated it as the result of his own experience, that soldiers who could write, and received letters from their families and friends, were seldom guilty of the drunkenness and other crimes incident to long absence from the mother country. They were not abandoned, and did not, therefore, abandon themselves. In that depressing climate they had still a future, and resisted the temptations of all sorts under which their neglected comrades so often sunk. What a lesson on family ties—on the sacred claims of kindred, is taught by this single observation made by a shrewd and good man! "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity."—Psalm cxxxiii.

freshed, and, after exerting herself to wash up the two plates, and sweep up her hearth, she remembered her promise, and sat down to read the Testament in the new book, as a task,—to oblige Mary! Slowly and wearily she finished the Gospel according to St. Matthew—her head instructed, her heart unmoved; but the occupation was useful to her mind and body, by diverting her thoughts from her afflictions, and she became more composed. Like most persons who dwell almost quite alone, she had got into a habit of uttering in a low voice the passing thoughts of her wandering mind. “I think I only promised Mary to read St. Matthew, but I may as well get over the others as I have once begun.” So she read St. Mark. As she proceeded, her curiosity was awakened to find out how far one history agreed with the other. She was, by her natural disposition, inclined to dispute and distrust, cavil and question; and, ere they parted, her worthless husband had half succeeded in making her a convert to his infidel opinions. She looked sharply after the contradictions which he told her were to be met with in the four separate histories of our Lord, but did not find them. Some of the evangelists, indeed, made mention of what others left out, possibly for that very reason; but there were no contradictions in their different

accounts of the same facts. They all related the same wonderful history of a Divine person who, having been promised and expected from the very beginning of the world, at length came down from heaven clothed in human flesh and shape, remained in this world about thirty-three years, during which period He proved himself by extraordinary miracles to be the Son of God—curing all kinds of bodily afflictions and mental diseases, and raising the dead. And then, after submitting to a dreadful death on the cross, to save mankind from the just punishment of their sins, went back again to the blessed abode *He* had left for our sakes, and will one day reappear in glory to judge the quick and the dead. That His whole life on earth was spent in going about doing good, and in teaching us how to live, often instructing us through the medium of short fables called parables, which was the usual mode employed in the East, where He deigned to appear. She could not, however, realize the existence of a God on earth to her own mind, but she was interested and touched by the many affecting incidents, and stories, and parables, so beautifully narrated, and gradually began to reflect upon what she had read in the day as she lay awake in her lonely house at night. The spirit, all unknown to her, was mercifully “breathing on the dry bones!” By

degrees she began to apply to herself the promises that have brought light, and life, and hope, and happiness to many a soul crushed by its own sense of sin and load of sorrow.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

“The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

“He was wounded for our transgressions; with his stripes we are healed.”

Winter thus wore away, and spring stole on—that spring, to the eye of faith, symbol of the soul’s resurrection after the dark passage of the grave—when buried flowerets raise up their heads from the earth which entombed them, and the dry withered branches of shrub and tree burst forth into buds and leaves of living beauty. She had taken Mary’s advice, and with her assistance brought her bed down into the lower room, termed *house* in Yorkshire, as less dreary and solitary than the one above, and by the light of the bright coal of her native county, passed much of the long night as well as day in reading. The change in the seasons was unnoticed by her, for deep thoughts were taking strong hold upon her mind, and she

wondered when little Nanny, with her round, rosy gleeful face, opened her pinafore and displayed a heap of daisies, and primroses, and golden dandelions, and in words so eager with gladness that she almost stuttered, announced that three white heads of snow-drops were out of the ground in mother's garden, so yellow crocuses and daffidown-dillies might soon be expected. Jane wondered, but only for a moment—the next she acknowledged with a silent aspiration of thankfulness that she had been beguiled of both winter and sorrow by a companion—her Bible. Storms and darkness were without, but she heeded them not—there was “light in the dwelling.”



CHAPTER VI.

“ ‘One thing is needful’—that our souls be grafted
Into the living ‘Vine;’
So that where’er our life-seed may be wafted,
Its springing bloom shall twine

“ Around our brows a wreath of joy unfading,
And radiant hope to cheer,
When our life’s day puts on its twilight shading,
And night is drawing near.

“ Oh, that its shades may find our work completed—
The battle fought and won !
So shall our souls in heaven’s bright dawn be greeted
With welcome words, ‘ Well done ! ’ ”

“ MARY,” said Jane one morning, “ I’ve
been thinking that this kind of life I lead

ought not to last longer. Though I know you don't grudge what you do for me, I will not be a burden to your husband when this quarter is ended at Lady-day. Don't say a word," she added quickly, seeing Mary was about to speak, "my mind is made up. In the first place, it is too lonesome for me to abide longer here, where everything brings my poor banished boy to my memory. I must go away. In the next, I feel it to be my duty to try to redeem the time. I used to think when I thought at all (and that was not often), that provided people were not great sinners, such as murderers, thieves, and unchaste, they did all that would be required from them, especially poor people, who have so much to do to get a living anyhow. I expected as a matter of course to go to heaven when I died; and my notion of heaven was a place something like this same world, only pleasanter, because there was nothing in it to plague one or put one out of temper or sorts, no sickness, no work, no want of food or fuel, or anything else. I can't say I either fairly believed or disbelieved what I heard at church. I didn't trouble my head about it. If I was not so good as some folks, I was not so bad as others. Jesus Christ came to save those that went wrong: if I was going wrong I must stand my chance with the rest. Any looking to Him as 'the

life, the light, the way ;' any determination to tread in his steps ; any desire to please Him never crossed my mind. All things have changed with me since then, and I wish to show by deeds, not words only, this great change which I humbly trust has been wrought in me, 'from death unto life, from the power of Satan unto God.' I could not face domestic service anywhere, with my character for having ruined both husband and son. And, what is sadder still to bear, to feel that I am verily guilty of far more than I once fancied, and far more than you suspect. I knew that poor lad had been to the preserves two or three times before the last, and when I found his trousers wet up to the band after he was gone, my heart leaped with fear that something very very bad had happened there, and I remembered how I had cooked without scruple fish and rabbits he every now and then brought home in his pockets at night. I did not fancy it quite right, but I saw no particular harm in it. I merely grumbled sometimes, because I thought he would get more by regular sticking to his work ; I only warned him to be wary, and above everything not to tell you, as Methodists always set their faces against smuggling and poaching."

"I grieve," said Mary, "that this was kept from my knowledge. But what made

you consider me a Methodist—you well know I never go to meeting? There are many very good people amongst them, but I was born a member of the Church of England, and I've always remained a member, and by the blessing of God mean to continue in the old way to my life's end."

"I thought at the time that when persons led such lives as you, and my brother-in-law, and mother, they were Methodists in their hearts. And that's the usual notion other people have of them also, I assure you, unless they think them a little crazy."

"It seems to me that craziness may with far greater reason be suspected in those who in a world like this, where from the queen on her throne to the beggar in a ditch, none can reckon on life for a single hour, fill up their time with the perishing things of the present, seldom giving a thought to that eternal future, which, whether they like it or no, must be their lot for good or for evil, when Death seizes on their unprepared souls. This is to be crazy indeed! As to the term Methodist, whenever any one seems to do their duty as far as they are able, I consider it very unjust to rob the Church, to which they really belong, of those members so living and so acting under her teaching. But to return to my poor nephew, how I wish I had been told he was a poacher. I had fears and

suspicious that his wild ungodly ways might end in that at last, but I did not dare to hint it even to you, for fear of giving offence. I would have talked to him if I had been sure of it, for he ever bore himself humbly to me, taking patiently all the reproofs I gave him, though, to say the truth, he seldom profited by them."

"Yes—he would hear anything from you—nothing from me; and that renders me sadder still; for, Mary, I'm certain he might have been led. He was very far from a downright bad youth—he had a kind heart in his breast—never cruel to bird or beast, only tricksome and mischievous, restless for want of being set properly to employment. After he grew to man's estate he left off pillaging orchards, and hen-roosts; and I could always count on his word when he said he did or didn't do a thing. When we were both in good humour he would do a world of work for me, fetch me water, break coals, hang up my line for my bit of a wash, make the fire and straighten up the kitchen; and always, whether in sulky temper or sweet, left the best bit of our little morsel for me. Oh!" cried the bereaved mother, clasping her hands, "I'm so lost and so desolate now! There, on that low stool, I think I see him as he'd sit and tell me the news, and bid me try to look less like an owl in an ivy bush, with

such bright, brown, twinkling, merry, merry eyes, and his pretty curls all shaking about over his broad smooth forehead, like his dead father's."

Sobs interrupted this self-reproaching speech, during which Mary could not help being reminded of that strange feature in our nature, never to prize sufficiently what we have till it is gone from us, and then to value it far beyond its worth. How often had she heard poor Jane grumble at being left to support this boy! How often complain of his untowardness, his impertinence, his unlucky tricks, his undutifulness, his vile associates, and frequent absences from home. But she forbore to point out this inconsistency. The Christian spirit which guided her actions, and put the law of kindness on her lips, told her that when the afflicted pour out the pent-up sorrows of a full heart, nothing can be more cruel, or more injudicious, than to increase their anguish by reminding them of past errors; so she waited patiently, though longing to hear what Jane proposed doing, till, this gush of grief being over, Jane went on—

"You are a great stickler, Mary, for what is lawful; and the Union is open to poor souls like myself, sick of the world and unable to maintain themselves in it. I hope too, that I may not be quite useless there,

for I would not wish to eat the bread of idleness any more, seeing how sinful and dangerous it is both to one's soul and body. Mary, you'll be surprised to hear that the story of Hannah, that once so grieved me, is become a kind of comfort. I did not use to like children much, no, not even when I was young—they put me out of my way, always in motion, never still, ever wanting something, and to be minded and looked after all day long to prevent them from getting into mischief, or coming to harm; but lately I have been brought to another way of thinking. Yours, always civil to me, if not affectionate, since my sore trouble have shown me such kindness, I see what children may be made of by good management—some, at least!” and she sighed. Now many motherless and fatherless children are always in a Union, and if I try to nurse them and train them in the right way, to the best of my poor knowledge, perhaps I shall please the Redeemer, who loved little children. This thought has already given me comfort, and may bring some balm to my heart when it is breaking about poor Dick.”

“My dear sister,” said Mary, “this is blessed news, but I am not so surprised by it as you may suppose. I never said anything to you, but I have seen a change in you some time, and I felt certain the heavenly

medicine I had put into your hands was bringing about that peace of mind which the world can neither give nor take away. When you despaired of yourself, I did not—I never could think all our dear mother's prayers and teaching would be lost to any of her children."

Jane shook her head mournfully, "Too late! too late!"

"No, not too late! Remember, the labourers who came at the eleventh hour were paid the same as those who had borne the heat and toil of the day. The Master rewarded their services, though for so short a time, because He knew they came willingly at last, and remained with Him to the end of the day. And He had a right to do what He would with his own (but He only, for we are all, rich and poor, accountable to Him our Master for the talent given to us). This is strange to us, selfish short-sighted mortals as we are, but God's ways are not our ways. Let us be thankful that we have such a Master, one who knows our infirmities and pities us. Jane," she continued, "what a wonderful book is the Bible! Something there speaks to the hearts of all who will read it with the desire of being instructed. I never, perhaps, told you before, seeing you did not once give much encouragement to such talk (Heaven be praised for the change

now), but I was, when quite a girl, as much touched by the story of the little Israelite maid brought captive into Syria,* as you have lately been by the history of Hannah. She was the means of curing the captain of the host of the king of Syria, of that horrible disease, the leprosy; and, far more than that, of bringing him to the knowledge of the truth. If she, a poor slave, kept the faith in a land of idolaters, how much more was I obliged to hold fast to mine! I, born in a Christian country, and enjoying the blessing of regular teaching from the ministers of God's own word! And I thought, if she could do so mighty a work, may I not hope, lowly and humble as I am, to be useful in my generation also? How faithfulness both to her heavenly and earthly master shone forth in her! She was not afraid to publish in a strange land, among pagans, the power of the living God. And how tenderly anxious that Naaman should be cured of his malady! 'Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.' And, O Jane, the different conduct of Gehazi! How sad to see, in the same history, the prophet's own servant—he who had every advantage of teaching and example, by living with a holy

* 2 Kings v. 3.

man—led away by the desire of greedy gain and pitiful perishing garments, to slander his master, bring even dishonour on God's dealings with His creatures, by asking, with wicked lies, such a reward for the miracle the prophet had just performed! Jane, this must make us less bitter against masters and mistresses, whose servants turn out a disgrace to them. We are too ready to say they were not allowed time enough to go to church, or had bad examples set them. It is not always their fault; not but that, under God, I do believe I owe what I am to my first and only mistress, dear Mrs. Lester, to whom, I doubt not, will be said, by her heavenly Master, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' It is one of my greatest pleasures, when I go to the old place where I lived so long, to carry her a nosegay of our prettiest flowers, or a few fresh eggs from the children's bantams, and see her kind old face all smiles, and be invited to sit down a guest in the very parlour I dusted and cleaned so many years as a servant."

Mary did not strive to alter her sister's plan of life. She had good sense as well as good feeling, and knew that her first duty was to her husband and children. She could have received her, changed as she now was, into her own house, and would even have

liked to do so, for in Jane's worst days there was a strong bond between them, besides sisterly kindred—Jane was a slattern and a scold, but ever a virtuous woman. Before her marriage she was giddy and imprudent, and paid the penalty in tarnished reputation; it was to retrieve her character that she contracted her hapless union. Never so afterwards—no immodest words stained her lips, nor did she ever profanely take the sacred name of the Almighty in vain, by those exclamations on frivolous occasions, so shocking to sober-minded serious persons. She was never guilty of breaking that commandment, the third in dignity, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” She had early learnt and remembered, “Holy and reverend is His name!” So Mary could have trusted her with her young daughters, but she was aware that it would be unpleasant to her husband. He could not be expected to see her faults with the same lenity as a sister did. And the presence of a grief-possessed woman could not but throw a gloom over the happy hearth of her children also. Her eldest sons, apprenticed to trades in the neighbouring town, came every Saturday night to spend the Sabbath at home, returning on the Monday morning: to them she would be a restraint, whilst the sight of their joyous healthful

faces, and their bright hopes for the future, must remind her still more painfully of her lost boy—prove so many fresh openings of the sore in her heart. She knew also, that next to prayer and reading God's Word, *occupation* is the best remedy for a wounded spirit; she thought that one so cruelly circumstanced would be both happier and more useful in a large public establishment, where her past faults would be almost overlooked, than in a private household. Save herself and family, there were none to befriend her. Life is ever uncertain with all, and she was aware that if she were called away first, Jane's situation would be deplorable indeed, unless she had by her own efforts made herself friends elsewhere before that event.

"I have been young, and now am old: and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread"—the twenty-fifth verse of that most admirable Psalm, the 37th, of which a late learned judge said on his death-bed, he had never missed repeating it daily for nearly forty years—seemed literally fulfilled in the instance of Widow Morton's family. Fanny, like Mary, had drawn a prize in life's lottery, but not with a chance hap-hazard throw. They earned it by steadiness, industry, and good temper. Fanny's husband, a superior

man as a blacksmith, had saved a little money when he married her. His attention was drawn to her by seeing her when he went early in the morning from his lodging in the town to his forge—a little way out of it—opening her windows, shaking her carpets vigorously, or whitening her steps with all her might. They had also met, but without speaking, at the office of the Savings Bank, where each had a little hoard. A late modern writer, who raised himself from the lowest rank in society, by the force of his own industry, to wealth and importance, has related that he was led to choose his wife from first seeing her outside her father's house at four o'clock in the morning cleaning a tub: and Fanny's husband also thought that an industrious wife would bring a working man a little fortune in the right use of her head and her hands. He owed his good principles and early education to the Boys' Charity School in his native town; for he was an orphan, and, like many others brought up in that admirable institution, proved an honour to it. He had since laboured to keep up, not lose, what he there learnt, through the medium of the many public and private institutions open to men of his class. He was an Elihu Burritt in a small way. The Emigration Society was then in its vigour. A

pleasing little book, published by the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, "The Young Emigrants," fell into his hands, and, to the natural desire of every man to improve his condition, was subjoined the noble consciousness of integrity, and ability, of self-denial, and perseverance. He resolved to go where his talent might be employed to the best advantage, and take a helpmate, as well as a wifely companion, with him. Fanny's cheerful face and brisk manner attracted him; but before he committed himself by any attempt at courtship, his prudence led him to ask (in confidence) her real character from her mistress. It was all he desired. She was active, healthy, honest, good-tempered, modest, and frugal. He forthwith offered his hand, which Fanny gladly accepted. She had not been eager to change her condition, was not always looking out for a sweetheart; but when a respectable man came honourably forward, she was straightforward enough to acknowledge her gratification, and she resolved that she would prove to him he had not been mistaken in his choice. She had a firm, decided, bold character, startled by no difficulties, fearing no dangers; the same desire to push her fortune in Australia—the same dependence on her own energy and industry. They were sent out at the expense of the

Society, then particularly anxious to place respectable couples in our new settlements : the money they had mutually saved was thus spared, and enabled them very speedily to purchase land, and build a nice house. Fanny, if not quite so generous as Mary, would willingly have run the risk of taking out with them their young nephew ; but the cautious husband was somewhat afraid, and Jane (with her customary want of judgment and usual selfishness) decided the matter by expressing a wish to accompany them. Nobody wanted her ; for the listless, shiftless member of a family is a drag-chain on the industry of the others ; and then she bewailed their want of feeling in enticing her only child to desert her ! Alas ! poor Jane had leisure to deplore her blindness many a long and bitter year !

The two little boys were taken to New Zealand by the son of their old master, a well-to-do farmer in the parish, to assist him in his agricultural speculations there. He had extensive sheep-walks, and their remarkable humanity to dumb animals, as well as general good conduct, made them very valuable servants to him. All were prosperous ; all married, and all had families (in new settlements as useful and valuable to their parents, as were children in the days of Scriptural history), and Mary looked forward

to the time when some of her own children might join these, their relations, with every hope of doing well. The habit begun in early life of putting by something to be a help in time of need was not abandoned. A little sum was still yearly laid up in the Savings Bank by herself, and each child was encouraged to do the same as an aid to begin life creditably; for Mary firmly believed that, by the blessing of God, she owed her present happiness chiefly to her early prudence. So situated with respect to kindred, she thought Jane could not do better than follow out her own plan of life for the residue of her troubled sojourn on earth.

From the hour when Jane held this conversation with her sister, she struggled to shake off her despondency and reluctance to active employment. She cleaned up her cottage, weeded the little wilderness of a garden behind, put her ragged clothes in some decent order, and very early one Monday morning, attended by Mary and her third son, a lively lad of twelve years old, to carry her bundle, left Bloomhill for ever. Thus Jane departed from her native village to the town where she had gone so many years before in the hope, and pride, and joy of early youth, to seek a shelter for life in a pauper establishment.

It was one of those bright days at the end of March when equinoctial gales, as if weary of their fierceness, temper down into gentle breezes; and the sun pours out heat as well as light on the myriads of young flowers bursting into new life and beauty. Starry clusters of pale primroses, set in a framework of fresh green leaves, lay in low groups under the hedgerows. Higher up wild hyacinths and cowslips mingled their tall soft stems, and blue and golden bells together in richest profusion, while buttercups and daisies spangled the roadside as if in emulation of each other. Birds, and bees, and butterflies were on the wing—all astir with delight. Husbandmen were afield. Everything betokened the glad return of spring—of the resurrection of the year.

As they slowly wended their way, the strong brisk boy ever many yards before them in very weariness of their pace, now tossing her little bundle, hung on a stick, from one hand to the other, then swinging it round him, or hoisting it above his head, both Jane and Mary were sadly reminded of their first entrance into active life by that very road. Mary was silent, but Jane at length turned her face towards her and said,—

“If, like you, I had early chosen that good part which cannot be taken away, I

might, with holy Jacob, have blessed God, and made my boast that I also had become two bands, instead of returning again with a still smaller bundle than my poor widowed mother made up for me on quitting her care."

Mary pressed the arm she held fondly within her own; it was some minutes before she could speak, then she said, "You are poor, it is true, in this world's goods, but it has pleased God to take away the heart of stone that was your stumbling-block, and give you the heart of flesh which is promise of treasures laid up for you in heaven. Much cause have you for rejoicing that your passage through the deep waters has been so blessed to you."

A few tears silently shed were Jane's sole reply. She parted from her sister at the door of the Union calmly—resigned, though afflicted.

The greatest conquest over her former bad habits was already made—the rest became light. She had the day before gone to church, and thus publicly acknowledged her heavy sin in so long turning her back on the ordinances of God, and appointed means of grace, to which might be traced mainly her own and her unhappy son's degradation and ruin. This she felt was a trial; but she submitted to it as an example

to society, and a proof of her true penitence.

"It is not possible to live for oneself alone," had Mary said, in her simple words, "we all act on each other for good or for evil. Even children have an influence over their playmates, and to see you in your affliction turn 'a prisoner of hope to the stronghold' for comfort, may touch many to their future benefit. Besides, we must show our faith by our works, as St. James says." So Jane went, and had a present reward; for instead of meeting the scornful eyes she dreaded, her humble neighbours, approving her conduct, bestowed upon her many little marks of kindly notice long withheld; and she became more confirmed in her fixed intention of devoting her remaining days to the good of her fellow-creatures.

"By God's blessing, I will no more cumber the earth," she said, as she sat by Mary's fireside in the evening. "Even *he* (her voice sunk into a whisper, for since his death she had learnt to speak solemnly and without bitterness of her husband) amended his ways before he died. May God have mercy on his soul, and forgive us both our many wrongs to each other! If I had been better, he might not have been so bad."

She slept that night at Mary's house;

and in the dusk, when all was still, they knelt at their mother's grave, and Jane gathered some early flowers, and a few laurel and rosemary leaves, still bright, and green, and sparkling, through the silvery hoar frost of a Yorkshire March, to take away with her.

The great respectability of her sister and brother-in-law procured for her a better reception than she would otherwise have met with; and after a while her own altered conduct removed a load of prejudice against her. Her patient industry, and affectionate attention to the children, gained her a place in the nursery, where she enjoyed more personal comfort; and, what she so earnestly desired, more freedom from the society of the other grown-up pauper inmates. When her infant charges were asleep she often found time for her Bible, no longer read as a task, but a treasure. At first the regular rules, the obedience required, and mixing with so many persons (some far from what she could wish), were very irksome to her, long accustomed to self-indulgence and privacy, but she remembered, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." She embraced these trials as the cross of Christ, and gradually that peace which passeth all understanding suc-

ceeded to the wild storm of passionate grief and shame and remorse, that once threatened to shake her reason.

Three years thus passed away, and could she but have learnt tidings of her son, she would have been comparatively happy, for she had earned the respect and pity of all connected with her; but his dismal situation remained the thorn in her flesh. She knew transportation in these days was a far more awful doom than in his father's, and that condemnation for life (the heaviest of all sentences) held out no prospect, no hope of mitigation; that his days and nights on earth were each days and nights of sorrow, privation, and punishment. Contrasted with his, "her lines had fallen in a pleasant place;" she was fed, and warmed, and clothed; the restraints as to personal liberty were not severe; the labour to be gone through not more than she could perform; her companions in poverty, when they met, were, at least, decent in conduct and conversation. Her pride and vanity and slothfulness were overcome, for "grief had acted upon her heart like the rod of Moses upon the rock in the desert; it had opened it—the well-spring of piety had gushed forth," and, but for the grievous consequences of their former indulgence, so terribly felt by him, she would hardly have regretted her humble lot.

Mary went as often as she could leave her own family to see her, seldom without some little gift to add to her slender comforts, and she was gratified in return by remarking the change effected in her sister's face by the power of Christian principles. Its vain, restless expression had ever tarnished her beauty in youth—that was gone—the melancholy which succeeded was without a shade of impatience or discontent; and her hair silvered over by sorrow, neatly banded on her forehead, Mary thought far prettier than the long frizzy ringlets once dangling down nearly to her shoulders.

The request of her sister to see her alone one morning—her gentle countenance clouded by sorrow, told Jane that news, and sad news had at length reached her. Yes! as her heart foreboded—he was dead! A letter of a few words from him, addressed to his aunt Mary, came inclosed in one from the governor. He had sunk under a fever, brought on by hard work, and a wounded spirit. He thanked his aunt, in the most affectionate terms, for all her kindness to him, and desired his love to his cousins, especially Mary. To his mother he wished to be remembered, and begged her pardon for his undutifulness, and the shame brought upon her—but there was no love sent to her! “He was,” he said, “quite glad to die, and hoped he had received

benefit from the good books and good advice his aunt and uncle gave him in prison. He was very suffering and very feeble, and could not write any more." The governor added to this touching account of his last illness, that his conduct had been quiet, orderly, and obedient. He believed him to have been a real penitent, and at his own voluntary wish he received the Sacrament from the hands of the chaplain. Jane wept long, and Mary did not seek to dry her tears. She knew that nature must take its course under such a trial. When Jane was more composed, she said—as she thought—that there was much consolation to be derived from this early termination of his days—his earthly sufferings were over—he had paid the penalty of his crime against his fellow-man by his own life—man could ask nothing more from him—and there was everything to hope that he had truly repented of his past sins, and gone to his Saviour for pardon and acceptance through his merits and blood.

Jane meekly assented. The soul dead to this world was born anew to another. She continued her course without murmuring three years more, and then the aching head and broken heart were stilled by the same awful dispensation, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." She died in the Union, of a lingering malady. Mary was

with her at the hour of her departure. "May I hope to see my boy again?" she anxiously asked. "I believe it!" said Mary. "Neglected as he appeared to the world to be, he was the child of many prayers."—"I never prayed for him in his childhood," she said mournfully. "But I did," replied Mary; "aye, and as fervently as for my own; and our mother did the same during her abode on earth. And since your separation I know you have done so also. I am sure you have." "Yes," she answered, pressing Mary's hand, "day and night—yea, seventy times seven, for I never thought of him (and he was seldom out of my thoughts) without a lifting up of my heart to the Throne of Grace for him and for myself." "Then be comforted, dear Jane, be comforted. The child of so many prayers will not be cast away." Jane smiled feebly—the first smile Mary had seen on her lips since he was torn away from her. "Thank you!" she whispered. "May God recompense you for all your love. You have been to me what the little Israelite maiden was to Naaman." She sunk back upon her pillow—a dark shadow passed over her face. Mary thought she was gone—her hot tears fell fast on her sister's cold brow—the dim eyes again feebly opened—the thin pale hands clasped in prayer were faintly raised towards heaven, and she muttered in low

broken words a part of Mary's favourite hymn, the first she had ever voluntarily learnt by heart:—

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling,
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace,
Vile, I to the Fountain fly—
Wash me, Saviour,——”

She had not strength to finish it. She sunk again upon her pillow, and the last words she uttered were, “Blessed Jesus, receive my spirit! Magnify Thy power and Thy mercy in saving us both. Wash me and my poor boy in Thy blood, and even we shall be clean.”

Such were the life and death of Jane Morton—such the life and death of her only child. Ten years have passed since their death, but many a lesson, and many a warning may be drawn by the living from their melancholy history—especially that of Jane; for parental duties begin before filial ones. The divine truth of “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it,”* was never more fully exemplified in after life than by Jane Morton. Hers was no sudden conversion, though doubtless many have been brought

* Proverbs xxii. 6.

about by a powerful sermon striking on the till then flinty heart, or some deep domestic affliction sending the careless or the guilty sufferer to the Saviour for aid and consolation. In her case (and it is the usual one) the good seed was sown in childhood—it had merely been choked by folly, vanity, and the trials and temptations of life when she reached womanhood. There it lay dormant—withered, but not dead—waiting only the hand of the husbandman to clear away the evil weeds and give it once more the dew of heaven to bring it to bear fruit in its season.

She early quitted the path, the straight and narrow path, that leadeth to life everlasting, in which she had been trained to walk, led away by the corruption of human nature and the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, but she returned to it again; not when (as the worldly would be ready to say) she was old, and fled to religion because she could no longer enjoy its pleasures, but whilst still in the prime of her days. She had not reached her forty-fifth year, was still handsome, and free from all earthly ties—a widow; not indeed childless, but the mother of one who could never more interfere with her plans, nor prefer claims to her maternal care. Yet she resolutely abandoned all opportunities of forming any other connexion, and withdrew into a Union, once

the object of her horror and aversion ; there to devote her remaining time and strength to nursing and teaching little children, from whom she could derive no personal benefit either then or afterwards. And Jane Morton is only one among multitudes, who have in the decline of their days gratefully acknowledged the blessed influence of a mother's teaching in infancy. To a mother the great and learned, as well as those distinguished by their deep piety in mature age, have traced up their success in overcoming difficulties and temptations. By her were implanted their first ideas ; by her example and precepts the first lessons in order, method, self-control, self-respect, were taught. The quick-sightedness of children is known to all who have studied their character. They soon perceive defective management in a house, and as soon lose the fear and respect of their parents, which are the chief supports of domestic rule. The slatternly wife, and negligent mother, will have far more to answer for than they are aware of in the next stage of life, for this world is but the passage to another ; whilst she who made her home a happy one to the man who chose her for his companion, and the young olive branches nurtured and trained in gentle love around their table, may have the blessedness even of heaven increased by communion with the souls

of untold generations of descendants, owning her as the first cause of their glorious immortality. "Verily her husband shall be known in the gates. Her children shall rise up and call her blessed."

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